Identifying the Female Collective: A Literary Study of Female Groups in Classical Athens

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Declaration

I declare that this PhD thesis has been composed by the candidate, and that it is entirely the candidate's work.

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23/07/99

Abstract

Although, in the last twenty-five years, scholarship on women in Antiquity has explored gender issues from all conceivable angles, there has been no single study devoted to the phenomenon of the female group in the ancient world. The preoccupation with the female group, however, requires some explanation. This thesis contributes to the study of gender in ancient Greece in two important ways. First, the focus is on women in groups, rather than on women as individuals in Classical Athens. Second, I use theoretical models drawn from social psychology, social anthropology and sociolinguistics to underpin the study. These disciplines help us to explain the preoccupation with the female group in the literature of the Classical period; to suggest the possible existence of a shared women's world constituting interaction between females in groups in the daily life of Classical Athens; and to hypothesize about the female perception of her life and involvement in her female community.

By adopting social identity theory, and conceptualizing the categories of free-born women and citizen men in Classical Athens as two separate social groups, rather than simply aggregates of individuals, the dynamics between them offer us some fascinating inter-group insights. If we view male and female in Classical Athens as constituting the most fundamental identity groups, it is possible to understand why it is the female group, rather than any other group, equally alien to the male culture-producing citizen body, that is particularly singled out for negative treatment in Classical literature and art. I also propose a way in which the hitherto underestimated frequency of activity and interaction of women on a daily basis in Classical Athens (Part 2) contributes to the number of negative references and stereotypical depictions of the female group in the literature of the period (Part 1).

In Part 1, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 examine the perception of the female group in different literary genres in the Classical period. We move from such transgressive female groups in myth as the Amazons, Danaids, and Lemnians (Chapter 1); to the presentation of female choruses in Athenian tragedy (Chapter 2); and the portrayal of female groups in Aristophanic comedy (Chapter 3). The results exemplify the consistent negative stereotyping of the female group. The genre of comedy, however, also offers a more positive paradigm of the female group, seen in the existence of a female language which is quite distinct from the male language, and is aligned with positive symbolism in the plays. This more positive perception leads us into Part 2, which moves on from an examination of the exaggerated and negative depictions of the group and attempts to uncover the female perspective of her group. Chapter 4 offers suggestions regarding the experiences and perspective of a woman engaged in a women-only festival of Thesmophoria, and Chapter 5 extends the investigation of the women's world to examine the female perspective in such contexts as other religious and secular ceremonial activities; the pursuit of economic and non-waged labour; and the formation of female visiting networks. By applying insights from modern social anthropology concerning the existence of flourishing women's subcultures in contemporary societies, it is possible to build up a picture of a vibrant shared women's world in Classical Athens. The existence of such a world, in turn, would have added considerably to both the number and the intensity of the negative depictions of the female group.

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This thesis is dedicated to my father with love and respect. So many of my academic goals were achieved under his guiding influence. I regret very much that he did not live to see the thesis finally completed.

Contents

Abbreviations and Conventions

I have used the latinized versions of Greek names. All translations of Greek passages are, unless otherwise stated, my own. The Greek texts consulted were, where available, the Oxford Classical texts, otherwise, Teubner and Budé versions were used. The practice concerning the possessive of Greek names ending in *es* and *us* follows the rules of *MHRA Style Book*, ed. by Derek Brown et al., 4th edn (1991), p.10. Abbreviations of ancient authors and works are as given in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. by Simon Hornblower and Anthony Spawforth, 3rd edn (1996). Abbreviations of journals follow *L'Année philologique*, 66 (1995). Abbreviations which differ from, or are not included, in these two works are listed below. Also given below are details of some editions referred to by page number in the thesis.

ABV	Beazley, *ABV* in the *OCD*
AQ	Anthropological Quarterly
CGF	Kaibel, George (ed.), *Comicorum Graecorm Fragmenta* (repr. Berlin: Weidmann, 1958)
JMGS	Journal of Modern Greek Studies
L	*Oeuvres complètes d'Hippocrate,* ed. by É. Littré, 10 vols (Paris: Baillière, 1839-1861; repr. Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1961-1982)
Pindar, Snell	*Pindari Carmina cum Fragmentis,* Pars II: *Fragmenta, Indices,* ed. by Bruno Snell, 4th edn, rev. by Herwig Maehler, (Leipzig: Teubner, 1975)
Serv. *Aen.*	*Commentarii in Virgilium Serviani,* by H. Albert Lion, 2 vols (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1826)

Introduction

κακῶν δὲ πρεσβεύεται τὸ Λήμνιον
λόγῳ, γοᾶται δὲ δημόθεν κατά-
πτυστον, ᾔκασεν δέ τις
τὸ δεινὸν ἆυ Λημνίοισι πήμασιν.
θεοστυγήτῳ δ' ἄγει
βροτοῖς ἀτιμωθὲν οἴχεται γένος (Aesch. *Cho.* 631-36)

The invocation of the Lemnian crime in Aeschylus's *Choephoroe* is one of a number of female atrocities cited by the chorus to contextualize Clytemnestra's murder of her husband, Agamemnon. It forms the climax of a list of crimes committed by such notorious women in myth as Althaea and Scylla. These stories all depict murderous female behaviour that defies normal gender relations, and indeed, normal human relations. Here the Lemnian crime, where the women of Lemnos banded together and, in a bloody attack on their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons, depopulated the island of all its men, is cited as by far the worst of all female crimes. According to the chorus, this collective female action has left women, as a race, cursed by the gods, and dishonoured by all mortals. It appears, therefore, that just one thing is perceived as more heinous than atrocities committed by single women: atrocities committed by a unified group of women. The story of the Lemnian crime encapsulates an obsession with the female group, which surfaces repeatedly in the literature of ancient Greece.

Although, in the last twenty-five years, the scholarship on women in Antiquity has explored gender issues from all conceivable angles, there has, as yet, been no single study devoted to the phenomenon of the female group in the ancient world. There has been much scholarly interest in the threat to the male order of the Classical world constituted by such notorious single female characters as Medea, Clytemnestra and Deianira. The even more threatening scenario of the transgressive female group, however, has been generally overlooked. The preoccupation in ancient Greece with the female group clearly requires some explanation. In Classical art and literature, the

number of depictions of the female group, comprising both real and imaginary female figures, is disproportionately large to the number of depictions of other kinds of groups, including such groups as foreigners and slaves, which were equally alien to the male citizen body creating that literature.

This thesis contributes to the study of gender in ancient Greece in two ways. First, the focus is on women in groups, rather than on women as individuals. Second, I make use of theoretical models drawn from beyond the discipline of Classics, namely from social psychology, social anthropology and sociolinguistics, to underpin my investigation. These disciplines help us not only to elucidate the preoccupation with the female group in the literature of the Classical period, but also to demonstrate the potential interaction between females in groups in the daily life of Classical Athens. It is not difficult to draw the conclusion from such investigations that the hitherto unrecognized frequency of female groups in daily life resulted in an increase in the number of references to female groups in the myth, literature and art of the Classical period. There are, however, other more fundamental reasons why the female group is more depicted than any other group alien to the creative citizen body. These reasons are based on the hypothesis that, in androcentric societies (including ancient Greece), it is arguably the two sexes that constitute the *most* basic social groups. Sexual identity is the very first of all the social identities that we learn. In addition, the categories of male and female form the most fundamental pair of binary opposites amongst all the different social categories such as class, religion, ethnicity and age. For it is possible to say that most social identity categories constitute many different alternatives, or subgroups, whereas sexual identity is generally seen as offering only two alternatives: male or female.

There are depictions of many different kinds of groups in Classical literature: slaves, foreigners, exclusively male and exclusively female groups, human, subhuman, and superhuman groups, imaginary and real groups. Before focusing on the exclusively female group in this thesis, it is important to ask why study this particular subcategory? There are important differences in the depictions of exclusively female groups from all other groups, which makes a study of female groups especially valid.

Although it is quite difficult to generalize about such a large corpus of material, the two key differences could be generally summed up as follows: First, there is a disproportionately large number of female groups to all other kinds of group in Classical literature. One can speak of an apparent thematization or problematization of the female group which does not exist in the same way for other groups. Second, all the groups, excluding the female-only groups, can be presented in either negative or positive terms. In the case of the female groups, however, there is only negative depiction.

Considering the issue of the disproportionate number of female groups, it is possible to enumerate only a small number of groups featuring exclusively men or male figures popular in the Classical period, in contrast with the vast number of groups featuring women and female figures. In the case of human men, male military groups are often depicted in myth, as in the *Iliad*, and bands of heroes travelling on quests or journeys also feature, as in the myths of Jason and the Argonauts, or Odysseus and his crew. There is also, of course, the parallel group of sons of Aegyptus to match the daughters of Danaus. Sometimes male slaves are conceptualized as a group and negatively depicted when they rise up against their masters or rule a city.[1] Amongst the male imaginary creatures of myth, we only have a few groups to compare with a vast number of non-human female groups (see Chapter 1, n.89); namely, the Cyclopes and Hundred-handers (sons of Gaia), the Giants, the Centaurs and the Satyrs (the last of which are simultaneously depicted as brutish, and yet wise) .

Neither is there such a vast array of mixed sex groups in comparison with single-sex female groups. Amongst the imaginary groups, for instance, we find the

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[1]See, for instance, the various literary references in Herodotus, Pausanias and Plutarch alluding to Argos run by slaves after its defeat by the Spartans at the battle of Sepeia (circa 520-490 BC). This example is given with three others that all negatively depict slaves forming communities in 'Slavery and the Rule of Women in Tradition, Myth and Utopia', by Pierre Vidal-Naquet, in *Myth, Religion and Society: Structuralist Essays by M. Detienne, L. Gernet, J.-P. Vernant and P. Vidal-Naquet,* ed. by R. L. Gordon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.187-200 (p.191ff). The essay was originally published in French in 1970.

Cyclopes (children of Poseidon), the Laestrygonians, and the Titans. An important category here, however, is constituted by real groups of non-Greeks or foreigners. According to Plato, most Greeks saw themselves as belonging to the larger of two fundamentally opposed groups comprising humanity; Hellenes as opposed to Barbarians (*Plt.* 262d). And indeed we have depictions of foreign communities in literature and art including such important examples as the Persians (Hdt. 1.131-40), and such other non-Greek peoples as the Egyptians (Hdt. 2.35-41), the Babylonians (Hdt. 1.195-99), and the Indians (Hdt. 3.100-05)).

Concerning the difference in quality of the representations of male and female groups, we see in the thesis that exclusively female groups, both real and imaginary, are depicted overwhelmingly negatively with very few positive depictions. The depictions of male or mixed groups in Classical literature can, however, show either positive or negative characteristics, depending on the group in question and the particular genre in which it is presented.

More precisely, there is a distinction among the male or mixed groups depicted, between, on the one hand, the depictions of groups analogous to free-born Greek adult males, which are generally relatively uncritically presented, such as in the military groups and the heroic groups, and, on the other hand, the non-Greek, non-citizen, or sub-human groups, which are generally depicted negatively, as in cases of foreigners, slaves, Centaurs and Satyrs.

This general rule has several exceptions which should be detailed. For instance, in the case of the depictions of non-citizen male groups, the Satyrs mix qualities of lewdness with foresight. The ambiguity is apparent in Plato, when Alcibiades likens Socrates to the Satyr, Marsyas (*Symp.* 215-16). Another difficult case is offered by depictions of the Olympians, who form a small-scale but still coherent group, essentially differentiated from humankind through their status as divine. In presentations of gods, however, it is rare for them to be conceptualized as a whole group. It is more often the case that individual gods, or subgroups of the divine pantheon, are singled out for depiction.

There are also exceptions to the rule of the positive presentation of groups

analogous to free-born Greek men. For instance, the suitors in the *Odyssey* are free-born adults, but are depicted in a critical way and shown to lack the proper hallmarks of a civilized community. As far as other exceptions to the general rule of non-critical representations of groups equivalent to the male *polis* are concerned, it would be wrong to omit examples from the sometimes rather introspective genre of Athenian tragedy. In such cases as Euripides' *Trojan Women* and *Hecuba,* for example, the barbarity of the Greeks could arguably be thought of as reminding the Athenian audience of its own city's brutal activities in the Peloponnesian War. But as critics have already pointed out, Athenian tragedy was a dialectical form; at the same time as questioning and criticizing *polis* values, there are also plenty of examples in tragedy which appear, in fact, to reaffirm them.[2] In Aristophanic comedy, by contrast, an especially critical view is taken of the *polis* and its voting public, but this is hardly surprising from an avowed educator and critic of the *dēmos* (*Ach.* 626-58).

The two major differences between female-only group depictions and depictions of other groups articulate two important questions which I seek to answer during the course of this work: Why is there a hugely disproportionate number of exclusively female to male or mixed groups, both of the real and imaginary kind, in Classical literature? And why, while all categories of the female are presented negatively in their groups, is a distinction made in the representations of the male and mixed groups between, generally speaking, positive representations of male free-born groups, and negative representations of other categories of group? The answers to these questions illustrate the importance of the focus on the female group, rather than on any other group that is alien to the male citizen community.

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[2]See, for example, Edith Hall, 'The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy,* ed. by P. E. Easterling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.93-126 (pp.98, 103, 118-20, 125-26), and Simon Goldhill, 'The Great Dionysia and Civic Ideology', in *Nothing to Do with Dionysos? Athenian Drama in its Social Context*, ed. by John J. Winkler and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp.97-129 (pp.126-29).

Previous studies of women in the ancient world

Since the Seventies there has been a steady stream of publications about women in the ancient world. Sarah Pomeroy's groundbreaking book in the mid-Seventies investigating women in Antiquity, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves*, was largely instrumental in furthering explorations both of the representation of women in the literature and art of ancient Greece and of their existence in reality.[3] There are now several useful volumes giving bibliographical overviews of the body of work focusing on women and issues of gender in ancient Greece.[4] The work of previous critics on gender has been indispensable to the knowledge about women in ancient Greece that we now possess. It is legitimate to ask, then, whether an addition to this ever-increasing mass of literature on women could contribute anything new. In some ways,

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[3]Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves: Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York: Dorset Press, 1975). This important work has been reissued with a new preface by the author most recently in 1995 by Schocken Books, New York.

[4]For just some of these, see Sarah B. Pomeroy, 'Selected Bibliography on Women in Antiquity', *Arethusa*, 6 (1973), 127-57; Phyllis Culham, 'Ten Years After Pomeroy: Studies of the Image and Reality of Women in Antiquity', *Helios*, 13.2 (1987) [Special Issue: *Rescuing Creusa: New Methodological Approaches to Women in Antiquity*, ed. by Marilyn Skinner], 9-30; Gillian Clark, *Women in the Ancient World*, Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics, 21 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); A.-M. Vérilhac and C. Vial with L. Darmezin (eds), *La Femme dans l'Antiquité classique: bibliographie*, Travaux dans la Maison de L'Orient, 19 (Lyon: Maison de l'Orient, 1990); Sue Blundell, *Women in Ancient Greece* (London: British Museum Press, 1995); and Barbara F. McManus reviews feminist approaches to the Classics in the last 25 years since Pomeroy. See Barbara F. McManus, *Classics and Feminism: Gendering the Classics* (New York: Twayne Publishers; London: Prentice Hall International, 1997). See also the comprehensive bibliography of Synnøve des Bouvrie, *Women in Greek Tragedy: An Anthropological Approach* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1990), and the useful chapter bibliographies in Elaine Fantham et al. (eds), *Women in the Classical World: Image and Text* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). There is excellent bibliographic material under thematic headings, begun in 1995 and kept up-to-date at the website 'Διοτίμα: Materials for the Study of Women and Gender in the Ancient World' (http://www.uky.edu/ArtsSciences/Classics/gender.html), designed and maintained by Ross Scaife and Suzanne Bonefas.

we have now reached a new stage in understanding the lives of women in ancient Greece, which requires a different sort of scholarship. This thesis is an attempt to introduce some new dimensions into gender studies of the ancient world to achieve a better insight into the lives and behaviour of women.

Much of the work hitherto on women in ancient Greece asserts the impossibility of ever attaining a clear picture of women's lives as they were lived. Because of the lack of female sources describing women's lives, the surviving material in the areas of literature, art and epigraphy, consists largely, if not exclusively, of male perspectives on women. Consequently, these studies attempt, at most, to represent a view of women filtered through male lenses. It is true that studying the way in which women have been represented by men is a vital part of gender studies of the ancient world, and can reveal much about relations between the sexes. But to admit defeat at the possibility of ever seeing *beyond* the male constructions of ancient women, is to give up far too easily. Just one example of this apparent resignation concerning the inaccessibility of the elusive 'women's perspective' [5] can be found in Sue Blundell's despairing disclaimer:

> The only 'truth' about Greek society which we can hope to recover is inevitably going to be a male 'truth'. The alternative female 'truth' - the way in which women viewed themselves, their menfolk, and the world in which they were living - is almost entirely inaccessible to us. Before embarking on any study of women in Ancient Greece, we have to come to terms with this tremendous drawback.[6]

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[5]John J. Winkler coined the term when investigating the possibility of an 'alternative consciousness' amongst the female participants of the Thesmophoria festival, which differed from the accounts of the festivals as found in male sources. See John J. Winkler, 'The Laughter of the Oppressed: Demeter and the Gardens of Adonis', in *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*, by John J. Winkler (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), pp.188-209 (p.188).

[6]Blundell (n.4), p.11. See also similar sentiments in Padel: 'No practical engagement is possible with Greek women. [...] Studying Greek women is reading male

Whilst the vast majority of our evidence about women's lives is indeed found in the work of men, the possibility still exists that we can find a way to access a different picture of women. Despite her apparently pessimistic stance, even Blundell cannot admit complete defeat. In her formulation 'almost entirely inaccessible', lurks the possibility of locating a more authentic vision of women's lives in ancient Greece. Moreover, in order to see beyond this prevalent male 'truth' of women's lives, some critics have already attempted to employ novel ways to study women in ancient Greece.[7] The most important departure in the majority of these innovative studies is their recognition that new strategies must be adopted if we are to have any hope of accessing that 'counter-ideology' (Winkler (n.5), p.189) representing the female view of themselves and their own lives. As well as studying the male-authored texts about

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images, male conserved. The way to the women is only through complex rings of men'. See Ruth Padel, 'Between Theory and Fiction: Reflections on Feminism and Classical Scholarship', *Gender and History*, 2.2 (1990), 198-211 (p.209).

[7]There are many innovators of approach, but a few who have particularly informed this work in the way they have attempted to see beyond the male constructions of women, are as follows: the entire volume of Winkler (n.5); the contributors to the volume *Feminist Theory and the Classics,* ed. by Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and Amy Richlin (New York and London: Routledge, 1993); David Cohen, *Law, Sexuality and Society: The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Margaret Williamson, *Sappho's Immortal Daughters* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1995), Sue Blundell and Margaret Williamson (eds), *The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998); Richard Hawley and Barbara Levick (eds), *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); Léonie J. Archer, Susan Fischler and Maria Wyke (eds), *Women in Ancient Societies: An Illusion of the Night* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); Froma I. Zeitlin, *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996); David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler and Froma I. Zeitlin (eds), *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); and the review article of several of the above edited volumes by Alison Sharrock, 'Re(ge)ndering Gender(ed) Studies', in *Gender and the Body in the Ancient Mediterranean*, ed. by Maria Wyke (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp.179-90.

women, we must also draw on other disciplines from outside Classics. These disciplines can lend us suggestive models and useful theoretical tools that can be applied to the ancient world.

For instance, both Winkler and Cohen have used contemporary social anthropology to highlight important questions and to introduce useful comparisons and contrasts which can be applied to women in ancient Greece. This approach is one that is taken up and developed in the last chapter of the thesis to investigate the potential of social networks amongst women in Classical Athens. I do not limit my venture into fields beyond Classics, however, to the discipline of social anthropology. For in recent times, and increasingly frequently, ethnographic material from contemporary societies has been adopted by Classicists who see the benefits of comparative studies. As a result, it is no longer considered a particularly recherché approach.[8]

More significant for my study than insights from social anthropology are theories derived from the discipline of social psychology, and to a certain extent, sociolinguistics (see Chapter 3). This is not to say that the thesis does not make use of male-authored texts from the ancient world which give us an impression of women's lives. On the contrary, material from male sources forms an important part of my work since we must inevitably consider male perceptions of women. But underpinning much of the research here are theories derived from social psychology which offer explanations for the way in which women and men, as two distinct social groups in the ancient world, may have viewed both each other, and importantly, themselves.

As the focus of this research is on groups and group action, rather than individuals, we need to consider whether a *group* of women is any more than simply an aggregate of individuals, both in terms of the way the members of the group

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[8]For example, see the casual use of comparative anthropological material in Lin Foxhall, 'The Politics of Affection: Emotional Attachments in Athenian Society', in *Kosmos: Essays in Order, Conflict and Community in Classical Athens*, ed. by Paul Cartledge, Paul Millett and Sitta von Reden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.52-67.

perceive themselves and the way the women are perceived by others outside the group. Social identity theory, derived from social psychology, and developed today especially by such social psychologists as Dominic Abrams and Michael A. Hogg, is especially useful to this project as it is a theory to explain the dynamics of groups. I explain the theory here in some detail to facilitate a clearer understanding of its application in the chapters that follow.

Social identity theory

The theory was first developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner. They saw the need to depart from the reductionist methods current in social psychology at the time, of explaining group phenomena in terms of purely individual psychology. According to Tajfel and Turner, the psychology of a group is vastly different from the psychology of the individual members of the group.[9] Since its beginning, the concept of social identity has been continually developed and refined, and is indeed still undergoing reformulation. Recent criticisms from feminists note the need for better conceptualizations of the plurality of the social identities of women.[10]

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[9]The pioneering works on social identity include: Henri Tajfel, 'Intergroup Behaviour, Social Comparison and Social Changes' (unpublished Katz-Newcombe Lectures, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1974); Henri Tajfel (ed.), *Differentiation Between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (London: Academic Press, 1978); Henri Tajfel (ed.), *The Social Dimension: European Developments in Social Psychology,* 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); John C. Turner, 'The Experimental Social Psychology of Intergroup Behaviour', in *Intergroup Behaviour*, ed. by John C. Turner and Howard Giles (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), pp.66-101; and John C. Turner, 'Towards a Cognitive Redefinition of the Social Group', in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. by Henri Tajfel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp.15-40.

[10]Some of the central refinements to social identity theory are found in the following works: Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988); Dominic Abrams and Michael A. Hogg (eds), *Social Identity Theory: Constructive and Critical Advances* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990); Michael A. Hogg, *The Social Psychology of Group Cohesiveness: From Attraction to Social Identity* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992); Michael A.

The essence of social identity theory is the concern with those aspects of the identity that derive from group membership.[11] Societies consist of different groups, which stand in varying power and status relations to one another. According to Henri Tajfel, social identity is an individual's knowledge that s/he belongs to a certain social group(s) and the emotional significance to him/her of that group membership.[12] One can belong to several groups simultaneously, such as age, class, ethnicity, nationality, religion, profession and political affiliation. As well as these large social groups, one can also belong to smaller social groups within them, called task-oriented groups, including members who are engaged on a common project, for instance, those celebrating a birthday party. One key group definition is sexual identity. At different times, one or more of these social identities become especially salient, and thus self-defining. Social identities not only describe members, but also *prescribe* the appropriate behaviour, or norms for the members. For belonging to a group, whatever its size and distribution, is considered a psychological state, which brings with it a collective idea of behaviour, conformation to group norms and discrimination against groups other than one's own.

On this model, there is a basic human need to order, simplify and categorize

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Hogg and Dominic Abrams (eds), *Group Motivation: Social Psychological Perspectives* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993); Michael A. Hogg and Graham M. Vaughan, *Social Psychology: An Introduction* (London and Sydney: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995), pp.202-350; and Stephen Worchel et al. (eds), *Social Identity: International Perspectives* (London: Sage, 1998). For books concerning specifically the social identity of women, see Sue Wilkinson (ed.), *Feminist Social Psychology: Developing Theory and Practice* (Milton Keynes and Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1986); Suzanne Skevington and Deborah Baker (eds), *The Social Identity of Women* (London: Sage, 1989); and Sue Wilkinson and Celia Kitzinger (eds), *Feminism and Discourse: Psychological Perspectives* (London: Sage, 1995).

[11]Social identity is that part of the self-concept that comes from belonging to a group and *intergroup* comparison. It is quite separate from one's *personal* identity which derives from personality traits and idiosyncrasies established through *interpersonal* comparison.

[12]Henri Tajfel, 'Social Categorization, Social Identity and Social Comparison', in Tajfel, *Differentiation between Social Groups* (n.9), pp.61-76 (p.63).

the limitless array of stimuli confronting us in the social world, and so we naturally divide the world up into our own group (ingroup) and what is not our own group (outgroups). The process whereby individuals recognize themselves as members of social categories, and define, describe and evaluate themselves in terms of those categories is called self-categorization.[13] It is commonly the case that such categorization involves the psychological accentuation of differences *between* groups and the minimization of the discrepancies *within* the group. It is assumed from 'social comparison theory' that people have a basic need to obtain, through comparison between themselves and others, a relatively positive evaluation of the self.[14] In the intergroup context, this means maintaining a relatively positive social identity for one's group. In order to achieve this, one focuses on intergroup comparisons which are generally to the advantage of the ingroup and to the detriment of the outgroup. Thus the psychological processes associated with social identity are responsible for generating a whole range of distinctly group-like behaviour, ranging from conformity to group norms, ingroup-favouritism and a depersonalized group-prototypical perception of the self (exemplifed, at least locally, by the car bumper-sticker that bears

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[13]Self-categorization theory as an extension of social identity theory was developed by John C. Turner, 'A Self-Categorization Theory', in *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory*, ed. by John C. Turner et al. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp.42-67.

[14]See Leon Festinger who coined the theory of 'social comparison' to describe the measures taken to maintain a positive evaluation of the self in 'A Theory of Social Comparison Processes', *Human Relations,* 7 (1954), 117-40. In the history of social identity research, however, researchers have moved away from the importance of generating high self-esteem for the group as the motivational factor in intergroup comparison, as developed in Hogg and Abrams, *Social Identifications* (n.10), p.23 to theories suggesting much more basic motivational factors such as self-evaluation (being able to identify the self with a group) and subjective uncertainty-reduction (finding confirmation of the self through shared group norms). For these two more recent concepts, see respectively, Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, 'Social-Motivation, Self-Esteem, and Social Identity', in Abrams and Hogg, *Social Identity Theory* (n.10), pp.28-47 (p.46); and Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, 'Towards a Single-Process Uncertainty-Reduction Model of Social Motivation in Groups', in Hogg and Abrams, *Group Motivation* (n.10), pp.173-90 (pp.186-87).

the legend, 'I'm a real Scot from Glasgow'), to discrimination against other groups, stereotyping and the homogenization of other groups (such as, to continue in local terms, the 'Edinburgh set').

Male perceptions of female outgroups

The material which a social psychologist studies - texts - can be written material, e.g. literary or historical documents, just as much as 'live' media, including taped interviews, dialogues, radio and television reports. As this is the case, there is no reason why we cannot apply the social identity perspective to the literature of the ancient world to explain why there are so many similarly structured stories encapsulating the male fear of female grouped activity.[15]

The common stories of transgressive women in the Classical period - such as the mythic Amazons, Danaids and Lemnians; female celebrants wounding men who spy on their women-only festivals; and women stabbing to death male survivors of war with their dress-pins - all drew upon male fantasies of the female group. The stories are imbued with the male society's collective feeling of exclusion from, and prejudice against, the female group. Hence we must bear in mind the potential that these myths exist as exaggerated and stereotypical depictions of the female group. Recognizing the inter-group context would explain why the stories repeatedly homogenize all female group activity, whether based on mythic or real females, to the one stereotype: illicit, irrational, and dangerous

For even if they did occupy the same *oikos* as their male kin, women clearly occupied a different conceptual space from Greek men. Not only were they considered

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[15]For a thorough explanation of, and justification for, the application of social psychology, including social identity theory, to *written* texts, see Jonathan Potter, Peter Stringer, Margaret Wetherell, in *Social Texts and Context: Literature and Social Psychology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984), especially pp.1-2, 79. See also Marisa Zavalloni, 'Ego-ecology: The Study of the Interaction between Social and Personal Identities', in *Identity: Personal and Socio-Cultural. A Symposium,* ed. by Anita Jacobson-Widding (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wicksell International; Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1983), pp.205-31 (p.214).

biologically different from men, but they also led quite separate lives and operated on a daily basis in different spheres of action from men. Men and women could live together without disruption in their family groups, where their *personal* identities were more salient. But when those same families split up to pursue activities in their other social groups, a different identity, and indeed a *social* identity, would have become salient.[16] Foreign women, Greek women, free-born women, women attached to an individual *oikos*, slaves, prostitutes, old women, married women and *parthenoi,* all constituted different social categories under the general concept of the female. Some of these categories are clearly overlapping, and each group would have been considered similar to the perceiving male group to differing degrees. All female groups, nevertheless, were essentially 'Other' to the male citizen body.[17] Consequently, there would have been occasions when sexual identity became the most significant

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[16]Turner distinguishes three levels of self-definition which operate in his self-categorization theory: the human, the social and the personal. The superordinate level is where the self finds definition as a human being based on comparison between other species (inter-species comparison); the intermediate level of self-definition is where the self finds definition as a member of a group through inter-group comparisons (intra-species comparison); and the subordinate level, is where the self is defined as a unique being based on interpersonal comparisons (intragroup comparison). Most perceptual activity is said to take place around the middle of the hierarchy of inclusiveness, that is, at the inter-group level. See Turner (n.13), p.45.

[17]For the popular literary critical use of the term 'Other' in Classical scholarship, see Froma I. Zeitlin, 'Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality and the Feminine in Greek Drama' in Zeitlin (n.7), pp.341-74 (especially, pp.346-47, 363), and Paul Cartledge, *The Greeks: Portrait of Self and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p.2. In recent Classical scholarship, the term is used quite loosely and is rarely accorded its full history in the tradition of modern European philosophy. Far from being of recent invention, its first modern usage dates back to Hegel in his *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Bamberg and Würzburg: Goebhardt, 1807); repr. in *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel Werke,* ed. by Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel, 20 vols (Frankfurt am Mein: Suhrkamp, 1986), vol.3: *Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1986), pp.145-55; translated as *Phenomenology of Spirit*, by A. V. Miller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977). It then reappeared in the works of Emmanuel Lévinas, Jacques Lacan and, particularly important for the gendered usage of the term, Simone de Beauvoir in *Le Deuxième Sexe,* 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1949).

social identity and established women and men in diametrically opposed social groups.[18]

The male citizen body was not only primary viewer but also creator of the art and literature of the Classical period. As a result, the images of the female groups in that art and literature reflect the view of the dominant group - the male community - of an essentially other group: women.[19] According to David Wilder, people rely on well-established dominant schemata, or, in other words, stereotypes, to describe groups other than their own, especially when they lack information about the other group.[20] As women lived quite separate lives from their husbands for much of the day, and as men would not have known what the 'shared women's world' was like, there would have been little knowledge of the dynamics of women grouped in ancient Greece.[21] This lack of information would have promoted the use of well-established

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[18]Amongst others, Skevington and Baker (n.10), pp.viii, ix, 5-6, 194-95, note that not enough attention has been paid in social identity studies to the multifaceted and transient social identities of women. Womanhood is not a unified social category which can be examined without reference to race, class and age. Skevington and Baker do not reject social identity as a tool to explore intergroup relations between men and women, but they advocate a modified version of it which allows the contextualization of the female.

[19]The negative stereotyping of an outgroup is found to be a characteristic especially prevalent in an ingroup which perceives itself to be high-status and in a more powerful position than the outgroup. This hypothesis is especially appropriate in the context of Classical Athens, and probably the rest of Classical Greece, where women did not have the same access to state-sanctioned power bases, and were consequently considered, in general, a lower-status group. See Itesh Sachdev and Richard Bourhis, 'Ethnolinguistic Vitality: Some Motivational and Cognitive Considerations', in Hogg and Abrams, *Group Motivation* (n.10), pp.33-51 (p.34).

[20]David A. Wilder, 'Freezing Intergroup Evaluations: Anxiety Fosters Resistance to Counterstereotypic Information' in Hogg and Abrams, *Group Motivation,* (n.10), pp.68-86 (p.70).

[21]I take the term 'shared women's world' from P. E. Easterling, 'Women in Tragic Space', *BICS,* 34 (1987), 15-26 (p.24). It is used here to describe the autonomous communal activities enjoyed by the fictional women in female choruses of Greek tragedy. I would suggest that such a women's world existed, in some form, amongst living women of the fifth century (see Chapter 5).

stereotypes to describe the perceived mysterious interaction between women.

If we return here to the important questions asked on p.8 concerning why there is a disproportionately large number of depictions of the female group, and why groups analogous to the category of the free-born Greek male tend to be presented positively, while those analogous to non-Greek, non-free category are generally presented negatively, we may be able to offer some tentative suggestions. According to social identity theory, the ingroup is most likely to focus on its positive qualities, while at the same time, delineating the negative qualities of groups other than its own. So, as the culture of Classical Athens was primarily in the hands of citizen men, it is not surprising that we find the literature peppered with negative presentations of all the different outgroups to the creative male citizen ingroup. As women constituted just one outgroup of the male citizen community, it is surprising that there is such a disproportionately large number of negatively depicted female groups, in comparison with the lesser number of depictions of other groups equally alien to the citizen group. This returns us to the justification for the focus of this study being on groups of women.

An hypothesis can be offered here which may be able to explain the disproportionately large number of female group depictions. A body of social identity researchers believes that in androcentric cultures, '[t]he two sexes, male and female, constitute the most basic identity groups, not only because they were the first to be learned (before national, ethnic or class identities), but also because they have traditionally englobed all others'.[22] As is shown in her figure 1 (p.207) and is alluded to further on p.215, Zavalloni suggests that, whereas there are a multitude of groups against which one can define oneself in terms of class, age, profession, family situation, political affiliation, and religious orientation, sexual identity is generally thought of as constituting a case of binary opposition, where there are just two contrasting categories. It is thus more fundamental than all other social identity categories. This analysis could explain why there is an overwhelming preponderance of depictions of

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[22]Zavalloni (n.15), p.215.

the female outgroup in the art and literature of Classical Athens, as opposed to depictions of the other categories of outgroup.

Apart from this basic reason for the preponderance of negative depictions of the female group, there may have been other significant factors which increased the number and intensity of the negative stereotypes of women. For instance, of all the outgroups to the defining male citizen ingroup, women constituted by far the most significant as they lived with men as wives, daughters, sisters, and mothers. Precisely this proximity would have made the men more conscious of women as an opposite social group. As foreigners were, for the most part, not encountered on a daily basis, and slaves were hardly considered to rank as human beings, women presented men with the most available and immediate human group against which they could define themselves by contrast.

The men of Athens would have been conscious of the fact that women gathered together to undertake joint activities, but may only have been dimly aware of what these entailed. Thus, according to social identity theory, a certain degree of curiosity, not to say, anxiety, would have been evoked amongst the excluded men, and the male group's fantasy would have been aroused to compensate for its lack of knowledge. If we conceptualize a much more active social life for Athenian women than has hitherto been appreciated in Classical scholarship (see Chapters 4 and 5), the provocation to the makers of culture, the male ingroup, would have been heightened at the growing recognition of a parallel female community. The negative stereotypical depictions of the female group would have thus proliferated even more.

Female perceptions of their own groups

Whilst research in the area of the perception of outgroups may tell us something of the male perception of female groups, it is less clear that it can tell us what the female perception of herself and her group might have been. Social identity theory, however, can help us put forward some reasonable suggestions for the female perspective, and thus offers us a useful way to appreciate the female point of view, which is, of course, completely absent from the male sources of the period.

As we have already seen, knowledge that one is a member of a particular group dictates certain ways of behaving and perceiving, when one's social identity, rather than one's personal identity, is more salient. And, according to social identity theory, such basic reactions and feelings as group favouritism, conformity to group norms, solidarity, enjoyment of the group, and positive evaluation of group activities are commonly attested in social psychology for group behaviour.

These feelings may therefore be aroused, for instance, when a woman identifies herself with other women and adopts the social identity of her female group. But what constitutes the knowledge that one is a member of a particular group at any particular time? Or, to put it another way, what brings to the fore a specific social identity, instead of one's personal identity? A well-defined group, rather than simply an aggregate of individuals, has been defined in social psychological terms in many different ways. The following are some of the major emphases in the identification of a group: a collection of individuals interacting with one another; a social unit of two or more persons who perceive themselves as belonging to a group; a collection of individuals who are interdependent; individuals who join together to achieve a goal and whose interrelations are structured by a set of rules or norms; and individuals who influence each other.[23]

This broad scope provides many ways in which the individual can both be deemed, and perceive him/herself, to be a member of a group, where his/her social identity would come to the fore. For instance, in the context of the ancient world, no free-born woman had the same rights that were accorded her citizen husband in Classical Athens. Free-born women could not take up public office (except if it was

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[23]Hogg and Vaughan (no.10) p.216. See also a similarly broad understanding of a group by Daniel Bar-Tal: '*Any belief can serve as an antecedent for individuals to begin considering themselves members of a group.* The belief "We are a group" may be instigated by any of the following beliefs: "We act interdependently", "We have the same fate", "We have the same characteristic", "We live in the same place", "We have the same goal", "We believe in the same religious doctrine", "We have the same ancestors", "We accept the same ideology", "We are treated in the same way", and others' See Daniel Bar-Tel (his emphasis), 'Group Beliefs as an Expression of Social Identity', in Worchel et al. (n.10), pp.93-113 (p.103).

a religious one), vote, give evidence in court, attend gymnasia or symposia, and they lived their entire lives under the legal control of a man who was their κύριος. These restrictions, which significantly determined the lives of free-born wives of citizen men and made them similar to each other and different from their husbands, would have helped define a woman's social identity strongly as female.

This is not to say that the only division in Athenian society was a division of gender. Many of the above restrictions imposed on women were also, of course, imposed on slaves, both male and female, and other less fortunate sections of society. It must be remembered that not all women would have maintained a common identity that defined them as women, along with female slaves and *hetairai*, in contrast with citizen men. For on some occasions, other social identities would have seemed more important, such as being Greek, not Persian; being Athenian, not Spartan; being free-born, not a slave; being rich, not poor; being married with children, not an unmarried *parthenos*; and being an old woman, not a young one. It cannot be emphasized enough how important it is to view the social identity of women in Classical Athens as pluralistic and continually modified by issues such as age and status. But still, the division of women from men into contrasting social groups is a useful theoretical insight. On the one hand, it can aid our understanding of the apparent negative descriptions of female groups. And on the other, it can help us postulate what the female experiences of her different groups may have been.

It is reasonable to assume, for instance, that women celebrating the women-only festivals such as the Thesmophoria formed a well-defined group, albeit for a temporary period. In this case, we are dealing with an example of a smaller task-oriented group, or a subset of the category of women in general at Athens. In this context, their social identity as women would have been paramount.[24] For the Thesmophoria was a festival that required the cooperation of women, the symbolic givers of life, to achieve the desired result of fertility for themselves and the land. The

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[24]In Chapter 4, I offer a detailed discussion of the Thesmophoria, in particular whether it was restricted to free-born wives of citizens, or more inclusive of other women such as slaves and *hetairai*.

symbolic goal could not have been attained without their joint participation and cooperation. Women would have formed other social identities which were defined by their identity as women because of such communal activities as attendance at births, weddings, funerals and the daily chores women carried out in their homes and neighbourhoods, most probably in the company of female neighbours, relations and slaves who were engaged on the same kinds of task (see Chapter 5). We can reasonably postulate that, because being a member of a group induces a psychological state of positive self- and group-regard, the women involved in such activities in ancient Greece would have been thinking optimistically about themselves and their sex. Their lives would have thus been enhanced by being involved in all-female activities such as festivals and female-dominated ceremonies. This social psychological insight suggests to us an important source of self-esteem for women in Classical Athens, and a way in which women would have felt themselves part of a community which they may not have felt in their lives as *non*-citizens of Athens.

Parameters of the thesis

The focus of this thesis on female groups is primarily directed towards the representation and reality of *free-born wives of citizens* in the *literature* of *Athens* during the *Classical* period. The limits imposed on the projects in italic above require some further explanation.

Period and genres

I chose to study the Classical period (conventionally circa 479-323 BC) because it was precisely this period (peaking in the mid-fifth century) that critics had always characterized as the most oppressive time for women, when they experienced the greatest degree of seclusion.[25] There appeared to be a general critical consensus that women's lives were not so restricted, in ideological terms, if not in practice, later on in the Hellenistic period (conventionally circa 323-30 BC). This is thought to be due

[25]Blundell (n.4), p.198.

to many different factors, including the gradual disintegration of the democratic *polis* system, and the end of the active involvement of the male citizen in politics in the *Ecclesia*.[26] Concerning the female group, insightful and novel work had already been published on the Archaic period, on Sappho and her circle of friends.[27] It appeared logical, therefore, to undertake a synchronic study of the female group in the Classical period. This is not to suggest that within this time span there were no developments in the prescriptions on women's lives and their activities. For instance, economic and social changes throughout society were undoubtedly brought about by the changing fortunes of Athens during the Peloponnesian War. The deprivations of war, vividly shown by many of Aristophanes' plays, are likely to have materially altered a woman's life, perhaps even necessitating that she work outside the house to support a family. Indeed, some of the negative changes in a woman's lot in the Peloponnesian War are alluded to in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* (588-97) and *Thesmophoriazusae* (445-51).[28]

Although concentrating primarily on the Classical period, I do not exclude material from both before and after this era. Whilst I offer evidence from the Classical

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[26]Eva Cantarella, *Pandora's Daughters: The Role and Status of Women in Greek and Roman Antiquity*, trans. by Maureen B. Fant (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), pp.90-98; Blundell (n.4), pp.198-200.

[27]Williamson (n.7).

[28]Chapter 5 focuses more centrally on the variables which require consideration when studying the very broad category of 'women' in the Classical world. These variables encompass not just the historical changes affecting society, but also the socio-economic position of the woman herself and her age. In the past, Classical scholarship has been too ready to settle for both an undifferentiated view of the category of women, and one which presents them as utterly static throughout their lives. It would be highly erroneous to generalize from the lives of free-born Athenian women to the lives of slaves or *hetairai*. In the context of a social psychological approach concerning the social identity of groups, it is vital to be aware of the different statuses of women. This project considers primarily the female groups made up of the category of free-born women married to Athenian citizens, rather than those of slaves or *hetairai*. Chapter 4 examines the potential overlap in the way these groups were both perceived and perceived themselves in certain cases. A recent article by Schaps deals precisely with the issue of the differences between free-born and slave women. See David M. Schaps, 'What Was Free about a Free Athenian Woman?', *TAPhA*, 128 (1998), 161-88.

period to substantiate each point made, I also adduce supplementary material from earlier - Homer and Hesiod - and some from later - Hellenistic, Byzantine and even Roman writers. Where I have not been able to find reasonable evidence from the Classical period to substantiate a point, the reader's attention is drawn to the fact that the only evidence offered is 'secondary' evidence from a different period. This broad sweep of source-material is justified, I would argue, by the fact that works composed by Homer and Hesiod, which predated the Classical period, clearly had a great influence over it, and significantly shaped its way of thinking, spawning many literary copies. Material which postdated the period often drew on earlier Classical or pre-Classical sources, and, depending on the attested faithfulness of the later writer, offers us information which we are not in a position to ignore. The problematic nature of this material, however, originating as it does in a different culture and period, is never forgotten. Periods before and after the Classical age may have been equally preoccupied with the female group. In order to establish any such continuity, however, a more diachronic study on the theme of the female group would be required. Although such a study goes beyond the scope of this project, my thesis provides a basis for further research in this direction.

Naturally, the chapters are selective in their use of the source-material. Some genres, which are frequently drawn upon in gender studies, may appear less represented (oratory, epigraphy), whilst others are cited very often (tragedy, comedy, philosophy, history - Herodotus). Such selection has been inevitable within the confines of the space available. The more imaginative genres have been preferred because it is they, more than any others, that reflect the emotive nature of the female group. For it was the imaginary world of the fifth century, that was fed especially, but not exclusively, by the theme of the female group.[29]

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[29]It is recognized that using certain genres at the expense of others can skew the picture of women with which we are presented. An attempt is made to recognize and account for this in this study. See John Gould who first described this problem in 'Law, Custom and Myth: Aspects of the Social Position of Women in Classical Athens', *JHS*, 100 (1980), 38-59.

By the same token, my thesis focuses on the literature as opposed to the art of the period. A detailed study of the depiction of groups of women in the artwork of the Archaic and Classical periods would require a separate work. Where possible, evidence is offered from Archaic and Classical vases and sculpture, especially in Chapters 1 and 5, but a more comprehensive examination of the evidence from the world of art must await a future study.

Geographical limits

The majority of the sources for research into ancient Greece, particularly relating to the Classical age, derive from the city of Athens. The literary output of this city far exceeded that of other states. References to women and women's lives are, therefore, nowhere more abundant than in Athens. Apart from Athens, Sparta and Gortyn are the only Greek cities for which we possess any detailed information on women. Even in these cases, however, the amount of information is dwarfed by the varied sources originating in and depicting Athenian life.[30] The debate has raged for a long time and still continues now as to whether Spartan women enjoyed more freedom, and were more liberated than Athenian women.[31] But as Sparta and Gortyn differed at least in

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[30]For women in Sparta, see J. M. Redfield, 'The Women of Sparta', *CJ,* 73 (1978), 146-61; Paul Cartledge, 'Spartan Wives: Liberation or License?', *CQ,* 31 (1981), 84-105; Barton Kunstler, 'Family Dynamics and Female Power in Ancient Sparta', *Helios,* 13.2 (1987) [Special Issue: *Rescuing Creusa: New Methodological Approaches to Women in Antiquity*, ed. by Marilyn Skinner], 31-48; Stephen Hodkinson, 'Land Tenure and Inheritance in Classical Sparta', *CQ,* 36 (1986), 378-406 (pp.394-406); Douglas M. MacDowell, *Spartan Law* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1986), pp.71-88 on women and marriage, and pp.89-110 on land-holding and inheritance; Raphael Sealey, *Women and Law in Classical Greece* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1990), pp.82-88; and Bella Zweig, 'The Only Women Who Give Birth to Men: A Gynocentric, Cross-Cultural View of Women in Ancient Sparta', in *Woman's Power, Man's Game: Essays on Classical Antiquity in Honor of Joy K. King,* ed. by Mary DeForest (Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci, 1993), pp.32-53. For women in Gortyn, on Crete, see Ronald F. Willetts, *The Law Code of Gortyn* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1967) and Sealey above pp.50-81.

[31]See especially Cartledge (n.30), pp.93, 105; Blundell (n.4), pp.154-55, 157; and Zweig (n.30), pp.32-35, 45, 48.

law from Athens in some of their prescriptions on women, and as their different societal structures would have had a large impact on the nature of the family, it would be wise to leave them aside in this study. Apart from the advantage of having a wider variety of material to draw upon from Athens than Sparta, Gortyn, or any other Greek state, it is more appropriate to focus on a limited area such as Athens for other reasons. For in order to make the best use of social psychological theories concerning intergroup dynamics, it is necessary to investigate an area, of whose societal structure we have some knowledge.[32] This is not to say that other cities in Greece did not have the same kinds of ideological divisions in gender construction as existed in Athens. It is likely, in fact, that they did. And where similar conclusions are possible for a broader area than Athens, I do not hesitate to say so. Insights from contemporary social anthropology, however, warn us of the danger of reductionism and generalization in studying other cultures. Those countries and cultures which we initially imagine will offer a unified image of their society and its practices, reveal frequently an unexpected multiplicity and divergence in cultural norms.[33]

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[32]Chapter 2 offers insights about the cultural constructions of female biology as found in some treatises of the Hippocratic corpus, dating to the fifth/fourth century BC This is an exception to the general tendency of the Athenocentric nature of the source material used in the thesis. The Hippocratic writings most probably resulted from the work of itinerant doctors whose location was likely to have been throughout Greece, perhaps mainly in the north - Thessaly, Thrace and the island of Thasos - rather than in Athens. In this case, however, insights from the Hippocratic corpus about female biology are shown to be broadly similar to work on the nature of women in Plato and Aristotle, based at Athens. See Nancy Demand, *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p.xi.

[33]By the Eighties, social anthropology had created, by generalization and reductionism, a 'homo mediterraneus' who did not actually fit any of the Mediterranean societies. Since that time, Michael Herzfeld has consistently called for a more nuanced approach to the concept of 'Mediterranean society'. He has demanded an appreciation of the differences between countries of the Mediterranean basin, which were too often spoken of as an homogeneous unit. See Michael Herzfeld, 'Honour and Shame: Problems in the Comparative Analysis of Moral Systems', *Man,* 15 (1980), 339-51, and *Anthropology Through the Looking-Glass: Critical Ethnography in the Margins of Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp.11-12, 64-70, 131.

Summary of the chapters

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part primarily investigates the negative male stereotypes of the female group, and is more concerned to describe the distortion with which the female group was commonly represented in the period. The second part attempts the recreation of the female perspective of group activities and has a greater emphasis on insights from sociological and anthropological research to aid our understanding of the actuality of women's lives in Classical Athens.

Each chapter explores the female collective in a different context. Each context, such as the study of female choruses in tragedy; an investigation of the female collectives depicted in Aristophanes' comedies; the representation and suggestion of the possible experiences of women in the women-only festivals of the Thesmophoria; and the study of the female networks in neighbourhoods in Athens, has its own specific emphases in the overall investigation of the female group. Although each chapter forms a self-contained unit because of its separate genre or context, the chapters offer a consistent picture of female groups in the fifth century. For in the first part of the thesis, the chapters focus on different literary genres, and demonstrate the universally negative perceptions of the female group. In the second half of the thesis, the chapters each take a different context in which female-only activities occurred, and all offer, through insights from such disciplines as social psychology and comparative social anthropology, a more positive perception of female group activity - the possible female perspective. The two parts of the thesis are linked together through the assertion that the creation of the negative stereotypes of the female group (Part 1) was increased by the hitherto unrecognized frequency of female interaction and their higher profile as a group in the daily life of Athens (Part 2).

The first two chapters concern the negative depictions of women in the literature and (to a much lesser extent) art of Classical Athens. In Chapter 1, consistent patterns emerge in the descriptions of such mythic female groups as the Amazons, Danaids and Lemnians, found in the Classical period. The patterns shown in the presentations of the female groups do not exist to the same extent in presentations of

other outgroups. The female groups are all depicted as transgressive and dangerous. Their threat, however, is always ultimately destroyed in depictions of them in one of three ways. First, they are shown to lack cohesion and discipline as a group as there is always a rebel to the cause who betrays the group; second, they are always exterminated as a race or reabsorbed into patriarchy, so are not allowed to exist as a single-sex group for long; and third, their character as a transgressive group is continually challenged by the creation of counter-myths which offer versions of them in which they are much less destructive and threatening. This homogenization and negative portrayal in the depictions of several mythic female groups can be explained if we look to social psychology. Here we find the need of the dominant group to repeatedly depict, and then negate, the threat of outgroups - even if they were only mythic groups. And the female group is seen to constitute the most significant outgroup to the male ingroup.

In Chapter 2, certain qualities believed by ancient Greek society to accrue, both by nature and by social convention, to the female, and in particular, to the female group, are described in detail. Several qualities are mentioned, but the central one is a woman's excessive and unrestrained emotionality, rooted in her biology. The female propensity to show emotion goes some way to explaining the key role of women in death rituals. Women's emotionality and their role in death rituals offers an explanation for why female characters were particularly appropriate vehicles for the evocative expression of emotion required in the chorus of fifth-century tragedy.

Chapter 3, which focuses on the depiction of female groups in Aristophanes, acts as the bridge between the two parts of the thesis. Yet again we encounter an apparent interest in the female group, and the way its members relate. Although, once again, we encounter stereotypes of the female group created by a male writer, and all the female characters on stage are played by male actors, there is, I believe, at the same time, an attempt on the part of Aristophanes to depict a more authentic and, indeed, positive image of female interaction and group activity. This phenomenon is investigated through a close textual study of the language Aristophanes gives his female characters, which starkly (and positively) contrasts with the language given to

the male characters. The women's language is generally less antagonistic, and symbolizes a means of relating which can attain peace. This less parodic and more positive representation of the female group, which surfaces from time to time in Aristophanic comedy, leads into the second part of the thesis, where I investigate the more positive experiences that may have been possible for the women themselves in their group activities.

Chapter 4 gives examples of the bizarre male-generated stories depicting the sanctioned festival of the Thesmophoria. Without exception, these stories depict exclusive female festival activity as transgressive and destructive, even dangerous to men. With the help of insights from social identity theory, I am able to explain why these stories concerning a respectable state-sanctioned festival may have originated. I then move on to more hypothetical territory, when I suggest the alternative views which may have been adopted by the women involved in the festival. This work provides an example of the kinds of insights available to us about the women's perspective in the ancient world when we adopt social identity theory as an enabling tool.

With the help of comparative social anthropology, Chapter 5 posits a much greater degree of freedom for women to interact in the daily life of Classical Athens. It develops the idea of a female network that links together women engaging in a wide range of female communal activities. These activities encompass other religious and secular ceremonial activities; the pursuit of economic activity and shared chores; and the formation of informal female visiting networks. Theoretical insights from social anthropology help us to recognize that the amount of joint activity carried out by women in the everyday life of Classical Athens has been very often underestimated. This general lack of clarity has partly resulted due to a lack of source material from the period that catalogues women's lives. But the mistake is also due to an ethnocentric bias in some contemporary scholarship that has failed to recognize fully the possible

scope of women's activities in virilocal societies.[34]

Drawing the chapters together, the Conclusion summarizes some fundamental insights derived from social identity theory concerning men and women in Athens. As literature and art, generally speaking, reflected the preoccupations of the male citizen community, it is not surprising to find negative representations of all the groups that could be thought of as outgroups to that creative citizen core. And indeed, as I have indicated in this Introduction, Classical literature contains negative representations of other groups which were antithetical to the Athenian citizen *polis*, including other groups of men, such as slaves and foreigners. The disproportionately large number of negative representations of women as a group, however, can find some explanation if we view the sexes, along with some social identity theorists, as constituting the most fundamental identity categories by which we attempt to define ourselves and others.

We can also suggest, on the basis of the evidence available, that the frequency of activity and interaction of women on a daily basis in Classical Athens may have had the effect of increasing the abundance of negative references and stereotypical depictions of the female group in the literature of the period. For on the one hand, men were aware of the existence of a flourishing women's world in which women carried out joint activities, but, on the other, they were excluded from it. Following social identity theory, the result would have been that the level of curiosity and even anxiety about the female groups was heightened. This anxiety, in turn, resulted in a whole range of negative intergroup stereotyping to compensate for the male lack of knowledge about the female group, and concomitantly, an increase in such visions of women grouped as are found in the Amazon, Danaid, and Lemnian paradigms. The almost obsessional allusions to negative female groups, with which the literature of the Classical period is saturated, are the result of such a lack of knowledge and anxiety on the part of the male-dominated society.

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[34]The term 'virilocal' or 'patrilocal', used of a society, as opposed to 'uxorilocal' or 'matrilocal', refers to the practice of married couples residing in the husband's community, or indeed, the husband's own family home.

Part 1: The Female Group in Literature: How Men Saw Women

Chapter 1
Transgressive Female Groups in Mythic Discourse

Introduction

This first chapter introduces the theme of the invariably negative literary depiction of female groups in Classical sources. The similarities in the depictions of the groups, however, do not stop merely at their shared negative quality. There are also many structural similarities in the descriptions of the different groups. These similarities suggest that the female group, whatever its precise character, was homogenized and depicted as an alien threat to be repeatedly conquered, controlled and contained in mythic discourse.

In *Das Mutterrecht*, Johann Bachofen (1815-1887) argued for the existence of a real society governed by women in prehistoric Greece ('Gynaikokratie' or 'Mutterrecht').[1] Although the existence of matriarchy was a much contested claim in the sixties, Pembroke has shown that much of Bachofen's evidence could not be

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[1]J. J. Bachofen, *Das Mutterrecht: Eine Untersuchung über die Gynaikokratie der alten Welt nach ihrer religiösen und rechtlichen Natur* (Stuttgart: Krais and Hoffmann, 1861); reprinted in *Johann Jakob Bachofens Gesammelte Werke*, ed. by Karl Meuli, 7 vols (Basel: Schwabe, 1943), II-III: *Das Mutterrecht*, ed. by Karl Meuli, 3rd edn (1948). Very few classicists entertained the possibility of a prehistoric matriarchy in the light of Bachofen's work, but note the positive reception of his thesis by Jane Ellen Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922) and George Thomson, *Aeschylus and Athens: A Study in the Origins of Drama* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1941).

substantiated.[2] Nevertheless, various scholars, including Merck, Georgoudi and Keuls, have suggested that even though Bachofen did conflate myth with history in describing the stories of such rebellious female communities as the Amazons and Lemnian women as memories of the prehistoric primacy of the female, there is still great value in a close study of his evidence concerning these communities of women.[3] For the prevalence of myths on a specific theme illuminates the values of the society that generates those myths. Mythmaking itself is clearly an historical event, even though the actual existence of communities of 'women in charge' was not.[4]

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[2]Simon Pembroke, 'Last of the Matriarchs: A Study of the Inscriptions of Lycia', *JESHO*, 8 (1965), 217-49 and Simon Pembroke, 'Women in Charge: The Function of Alternatives in Early Greek Tradition and the Ancient Idea of Matriarchy', *JWI*, 30 (1967), 1-35. More recently, however, Pembroke's work in turn has been criticized for some major flaws. See Bella Zweig, 'The Primal Mind: Using Native American Models for the Study of Ancient Greece', in *Feminist Theory and the Classics*, ed. by Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and Amy Richlin (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), pp.145-80 (p.169).

[3]Mandy Merck, 'The City's Achievements: The Patriotic Amazonamachy and Ancient Athens', in *Tearing the Veil: Essays on Femininity*, ed. by Susan Lipshitz (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp.95-115 (pp.96, 98); Stella Georgoudi, 'Creating a Myth of Matriarchy', in *A History of Women in the West*, ed. by Georges Duby and Michelle Perot, 5 vols (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press, 1992-94), I: *From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, ed. by Pauline Schmitt Pantel, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (1992), pp.449-63 (p.463); Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens*, 2nd edn (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1993), pp.65-66. See also on this theme, Joan Bamberger, 'The Myth of Matriarchy: Why Men Rule in Primitive Society', in *Woman, Culture, and Society*, ed. by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp.263-80 (p.267).

[4]The debate about the existence of real Amazons, however, has recently resurfaced with the report of finds by archaeologist Jeannine Davis-Kimball, following her excavation of fifty burial mounds near the town of Pokrovka on the Kazakhstan border, 1,000 miles east of the steppes of the southern Ukraine. At the site she found that seven out of forty female graves contained iron swords or daggers, bronze arrowheads and whetstones. The weapons are identical to those found in male-tombs, apart from their smaller hand-grips, which appear to have been produced specifically for female use. They can be excluded from the category of ritual objects as they had clearly been in use. They are also unlikely to have functioned as hunting equipment because no

This chapter examines the many similar stories which were popular in Classical Athens, and one may more broadly say, Classical Greece, about mythic groups of transgressive women, and focuses on their representation primarily in literature, but also, to a certain extent, in visual art. Although a vast number of transgressive female groups could be investigated, this survey is restricted to certain key groups: the Amazons as a model group, in comparison with the Danaids and the Lemnians, all three being examples of mortal women. A second category of females, namely, the immortal/monster women, such as the Sirens, Harpies, and Stymphalides, shares, as a man-slaying female group, a similar ideological position with the mortal group in the mythic discourse of the ancient world. This group is also briefly considered in this chapter.

As myths operate on many different levels of symbolism, they can be read in many different ways which are not mutually exclusive.[5] This chapter, however, focuses

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bones of wild game were found in the area. Many bones of sheep, horses and camel, however, were found, suggesting the settlers were nomadic herders rather than hunters. Furthermore, the bone analysis of one thirteen/fourteen year-old girl with bowed leg bones attests to a life on horseback, and a bent arrowhead found in the body cavity of another woman suggests she had been killed in battle. In a second group of five female graves, mortuary offerings of clay or stone altars, seashells and prized camel bones were found, which all point to the women being priestesses who held quite high positions in society. The graves are thought to belong to the Sauromatae, later called the Sarmatian culture of between 600 to 200 BC, who, according to Herodotus, resulted from interbreeding between Amazons and Scythians (4.110-117). The graves suggest that women could be both warriors and valued members of society. See Jeannine Davis-Kimball, 'Warrior Women of the Eurasian Steppes', *Archaeology,* January/February 1997, pp.45-48. See also the review of these findings by Bob Holmes, 'Women Warriors Come Back from the Grave', *New Scientist,* 8 February 1997, p.17.

[5]See Charles Segal on myth as a complex network of interrelated symbols, patterns and structures which create an extensive and comprehensive 'megatext'. A particular mythic situation, such as that found in Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, of the trio Hyllus-Hercules-Deianira evokes specific mythic parallels in the megatext such as the trios of Telemachus-Odysseus-Penelope and Orestes-Agamemnon-Clytemnestra. It also evokes parallels with other stories of youths, who, like Hyllus, are approaching manhood and progressing through an age transition, for example, Pentheus, Phaethon, Hippolytus and Actaeon. See Charles Segal, 'Greek Myth as a Semiotic and Structural System and the Problem of Tragedy', *Arethusa,* 16 (1983), 173-98 (pp.175-79).

on three similar themes that occur in the stories of all three groups of women: first, the theme of the odd-one-out, rebel or 'strike-breaker' in the group who does not conform to the group norm; second, the necessary extermination or reabsorption of the female group (which is not allowed to exist for long as a female-only community) into patriarchy; and third, the existence of a counter-myth and sanitized version of the common story which portrays the women as more sympathetic towards men.[6] The fact that these themes are common to the depictions of the three groups indicates that female collectives were largely depicted in a stereotypical and negative way. The exploration of these stereotypical themes, enriched by insights from both psychoanalysis and the social psychology of groups, can offer us a clearer understanding of why the concept of a group of women so preoccupied ancient Athenian society.

The problematization of, and preoccupation with, female groups in myth is unique and does not occur in the case of male groups. There is no similar abundance in the representation of male groups in myth. To take an example of this discrepancy, whereas there are many examples of semi-monstrous female groups in Greek myth (see n.89 here), there are only very few categories of equivalent male groups, namely Satyrs, Centaurs, Giants, and the two categories of the Cyclopes and Hundred-handers (monstrous sons of Gaia).

Whereas amongst female groups there are virtually no completely positive examples of group interaction and cohesiveness, arguably only the Charites and the Horae, amongst the much fewer examples of male groups, there are both positive and negative depictions (see Introduction, pp.7-8). A positive depiction generally attaches to male groups which are analogous to free-born adult Greeks, such as heroes and warriors, like the Greeks in the *Iliad*, and the myths of Odysseus and Jason with their

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[6]The provocative term 'strike-breaker' is borrowed from Keuls (n.3), p.323. Although the term has strong ideological implications, it is retained here because it is the only term which captures the sense of a rebel consciously disobeying the norms of the group and siding with the enemy camp. It is much more precise in this respect than such other terms as 'rebel' or 'odd-one-out'.

respective crews. This is not to say that these groups are always heroic and positively depicted; they are clearly not. But the kind of blanket negative presentation which is attached to female collectives is absent from their portrayal. According to social identity theory, these groups would be depicted positively because they are seen as analogous to the myth-creating ingroup of free-born Athenian men.

Apart from the example of the companion male group to the Danaids, the sons of Aegyptus, the negative depiction of male groups is usually found in representations of such subhuman, semi-divine groups, which are antithetical to the male citizen group, as Centaurs, Satyrs and Giants. But even amongst these depictions, there is not the same degree of negative stereotyping and concentration on presenting the groups as essentially unstable anti-communities. For instance, the Satyrs remain ambiguously poised between the status of lewd, bestial creatures and divine companions of the god who introduce such inventions to humankind, as wine, the lyre and fire. There are some Satyrs or Silens, such as Marsyas and Silenus who are shown to be very gifted. Amongst the Centaurs, Chiron and Pholus hold unique positions as offering civilized exceptions to the general rule amongst the bestial Centaurs. These exceptions could be seen as presenting examples of the stereotypical 'odd-one-out' theory. In these cases, however, there is clearly not such an emphasis on the rebellious individual who actively defies the group norms, as is the case in the female groups.

It is difficult to explain why the female group is so much more problematized and thematized in myth than the male group. In the Introduction, I suggested that this phenomenon may relate to the fact that the most basic social identity division in the androcentric world of Classical Athens existed between male and female. It is not then surprising to find that in myth it is the female group which acquires more frequently exaggerated and negative depictions. In addition to this, the female group may have been considered by Classical Athenian males the archetypal anti-community. For although women were a binary opposite group to men, they were also the closest group to them, being the wives, mothers and daughters of those men and living with them in the same *oikos*. Foreigners were, for the most part, out of sight and therefore often out of mind, and slaves were not credited with very much humanity at all.

According to Aristotle, a slave's deliberative faculty was completely absent, whereas a woman's was present but 'without authority' (*akuron*), and a child's was 'immature' (*ateles*) (*Pol.* 1260a12-14). Also, whereas a women and a slave both had the potential to be good, women were inferior beings, but slaves were completely worthless (Arist. *Poet.* 1454a20-22). So the closest and most immediate group for the male Athenian to use as an outgroup against which he could define both himself and his male community would have been that of women. As a result, it is mythic creations of monstrous women that are the most negative and predominate in literature and art.

No attempt is made here to unearth the underlying 'meaning' of any given myth. This would be an impossible task, since each myth is a version altered by the individual writer, artist, period, genre, or occasion of telling. There is no clearly-defined canon of myths with which we may compare each new version, each time monitoring the new input of any particular artist or writer. We only have the many versions - mythographic forms of the myth - that continually change and develop the myth.[7] Yet the fact that there was a whole network of myths about female groups, ranging from the mortal to the monstrous, which were all of an horrific nature, reveals an essential preoccupation with the theme of the transgressive female group. Images of such groups as the Amazons, Danaids and Lemnians turned the concept of the female group into something not just negative but terrifying, thereby exaggerating the negative side of

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[7]For those critics who stress this fluid nature of Greek myth, see Walter Burkert, *Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual* (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1979), pp.2, 27-29; David Konstan, 'Comparative Methods in Mythology', *Arethusa,* 19 (1986), 87-99 (pp.87-88); Jan N. Bremmer, *Greek Religion,* Greece and Rome New Surveys in the Classics, 24 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.56-57; H. A. Shapiro, *Myth into Art: Poet and Painter in Classical Greece* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p.4; Vanda Zajko, 'Speaking Myth', *Arethusa,* 28 (1995), 21-38 (p.28); Ken Dowden, 'Approaching Women through Myth: Vital Tool or Self-Delusion?', in *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments,* ed. by Richard Hawley and Barbara Levick (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp.44-57 (pp.47-48, 53); and Keuls (n.3), p.323. The early development and adaptation of myths is summarized well by Shapiro, above, pp.1-7; Bremmer, above, pp.57-58 and 98-99; and Timothy Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp. xv-xvii.

the group. In turn, these representations justified and encouraged the preoccupation with the female group in the mind of the Greek male.

Before beginning a detailed study, some comments are necessary on the sources used; the nature of the study of myth; and some additional insights from social psychology concerning groups.

The sources

The focus of this chapter is on the perception of the female group in ancient Athenian society of the Classical period. As much of the extant mythographic evidence for these stories comes from Athens, in the works of orators, tragedians, comic playwrights, sculptors and vase-painters, most of my findings can only strictly relate to Athenian society. This is not to say that other ancient Greek societies were not equally preoccupied with the myths of the female group. For instance, whilst we have more images of the Amazon from Athens than any other city, Amazon depictions have been discovered throughout Greece.[8] Mythic material was reproduced in many Greek cities and cannot be considered the privilege of Athens. Two sources frequently cited in this chapter, Pindar and Herodotus, who contributed their own versions to transgressive female myths, were not based at Athens, but travelled around Greece. The fact that the myths found favour in many different parts of Greece indicates their universal appeal. For most of the observations in this chapter, therefore, it would be justified to talk of ancient Greek society. As the interest of this thesis is centrally on Athenian society, however, I direct my attention to the implications about *Athenian* gender relations which become apparent from the ancient preoccupation with myths about the female group.

The second consideration about the sources cited in this chapter relates to their dating. As the focus of this chapter is on the Classical period, the sources which give us information on that society should date from earlier times, and be still in circulation, or be contemporaneous. And indeed, there is ample evidence from the fifth and fourth

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[8]Keuls (n.3), p.4

centuries and earlier, e.g. Homer, Hesiod, Herodotus, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Lysias, Isocrates and visual art from the period, that the female group was presented in stereotypical and negative terms. This negative stereotyping, I argue, suggests the existence of a *contemporary* male need to respond to the threat of the female collective.

In this chapter, however, I draw more broadly on sources which date from circa the eighth century BC to the second century AD. The later Hellenistic and early Roman mythographers who are cited here can be justified in as much as they followed earlier Greek sources in their compilations. Into this category fall Apollonius Rhodius (*Argonautica,* third century BC), whose most important literary influences were Homer, Pindar (*Pythian Odes* 4) and Euripides (*Medea*); Diodorus Siculus (first century BC), who used a variety of earlier sources, not always attributable; and Pseudo-Apollodorus (*Bibliotheca,* first or second century AD), whose level of faithfulness is proven, when we can compare his work with such extant works on which he claimed to have drawn, as Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Euripides' *Alcestis* and *Medea* and Apollonius's *Argonautica*. He also claimed to have drawn considerably upon the works of Homer, Hesiod, Pherecydes and Acousilaos. Thus when he takes evidence from Pherecydes of Leros, who compiled Greek myths and legends in the first half of the fifth century, and was, more than any other, the model and foundation for the work of Apollodorus, the likelihood is that the account of Apollodorus is true to Pherecydes' original work. Other useful later sources prove to be Hyginus (*Fabulae,* second century AD), which is, in part, not as trustworthy as the others, since the author did not know Greek. Also, the rich collections of mythography scattered in various scholia, such as in Homer, Pindar, Euripides, Aeschylus and Apollonius prove useful. Whilst some of these sources may conflate evidence and be inaccurate in some details, they all, nevertheless, draw on an inherited tradition that ultimately derives from the earliest mythic versions.

Just as the Archaic and Classical mythographers and other exponents of myth were a product of their own times, the later mythographers were in their turn affected by their own different historical and cultural circumstances. As a result, their work

reflected their own society's particular preoccupations, which may have differed from the concerns of the earlier period. Their evidence on the myths of the female groups cannot, however, be ignored, since it can often enhance our knowledge by filling in a missing theme extant in an earlier period. Nevertheless, their work must be studied with the reservation that they do not offer us perceptions directly from the Classical period itself, but are 'second-hand', and must be treated accordingly as only supporting evidence. For each assertion made, primary evidence is offered from the Classical period and only secondary collaboration is sought from the works of later periods. If no evidence is available from the Classical period, the reader's attention is drawn to this fact.

The study of myth

The tradition of modern scholarship on Greek mythology dates back to the beginning of the eighteenth century, and has encompassed many different and often contradictory schools of thought. Excellent summaries of the tradition of the study of myth are found in Dowden, Graf and Bremmer.[9]

One question frequently asked about the origin of a myth's popularity, which is important to this study, is whether certain myths were popular because they were used to explain and justify particular customs and attitudes, or because they gave expression to men's basic fears. While the first approach is that of the social anthropologist, the second generally reflects the psychologist's position.[10] This difficult

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[9]Ken Dowden, *The Uses of Greek Mythology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp.22-53; Fritz Graf, *Greek Mythology: An Introduction,* trans. by Thomas Marier (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), *passim*; and Bremmer (n.7), pp.55-57. See also the detailed survey of John Peradotto in *Classical Mythology: An Annotated Bibliographical Survey* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1981).

[10]See, for example, this debate in Froma I. Zeitlin, 'The Dynamics of Misogyny: Myth and Mythmaking in Aeschylus's *Oresteia*', in her *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp.87-119; and P. Walcot, 'Greek Attitudes Towards Women: The Mythological Evidence', *G&R*, 31 (1984), 37-47 (p.39).

dichotomy can be illustrated with the following concrete example: Do the vast number of depictions of defeated Amazons both in public and private art forms have primarily a justificatory function for the oppression of women? Or are we to tackle the issue from the opposite direction, and understand the works as an unconscious representation of contemporary society's fear of untamed woman? This basic either/or scenario does not allow space for the symbiotic relationship of myth and life. And indeed, both Zeitlin and Walcot suggest that these alternatives are not mutually exclusive:

> Psychic impulses compel the creation of a myth, but once objectified and projected outward, the myth reinforces, legitimates, and even influences the formation of these impulses by the authoritative power of that projection. [...] There is a continuing reciprocity between the external and internal, between individual psyche and collective ideology, which gives myth its dynamic life.[11]

In this chapter, my basic position is aligned with that of Zeitlin and Walcot. For I adopt the above argument that the groupings of transgressive women both reflected 'psychic impulses', evoked by the general fear of any women in a group, and functioned as tales to justify the norms of law and custom which sought to keep women apart from each other and under male control.[12] But there is a third reason too, when we recognize the group psychology involved in the male stereotyping of the female group.

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[11]Zeitlin (n.10), p.119. See also Walcot (n.10), p.40.

[12]See the seminal work of John Gould comparing the contrasting results from studies of women, on the one hand, in the social structure defined by law and custom, and, on the other, in myth: 'Law, Custom, Myth: Aspects of the Social Position of Women in Classical Athens', *JHS*, 100 (1980), 38-59 (*passim*). See also Bamberger (n.3), pp.276-77, 279-80 who understands the insistent message of the cross-cultural myths of the rule of women, propagated by male society, as the justification for male dominance over women. For in the mythic stories, women are always shown to be incompetent by being unable to retain the seat of power.

Applying discourse analysis to the study of ancient Greek presentations of women[13]

A number of social psychologists who also employ social identity theory, have recourse to a theory known as 'discourse analysis'. This theory examines the way in which the use of certain language *creates* a specific image.[14] We can see some examples of discourse analysis in action in the construction of the mythic groups of Amazons, Danaids and Lemnians. When the Amazons are repeatedly labelled 'man-slayers' or given names associating them with destruction (*Andromache, Deinomache*), or the untamed animal (*Melanippe, Hippomache*), a certain image of them is being fostered and propagated. When the atrocity of the Lemnian crime is repeatedly described and used to exemplify the worst of all crimes (Aesch. *Cho.* 631-33, Hdt. 6.138.4); and, more importantly, when provocative words such as θηλυκρατής are used, meaning both, 'which conquers women', and, more sinisterly, 'where the female has power' (Aesch. *Cho.* 600), the descriptions of the groups are being developed in certain biased ways, which furnish mythic discourse with its repertoire to be adopted, adapted and reconstructed in new mythographic versions.[15] Discourse analysis examines the constructions of the group through language - most often speech - but also the written text. Discourse analysis is even an appropriate tool in the study of artistic images, which are, after all, simply constructions of the group in a different

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[13]A knowledge of social identity theory, as explained in the Introduction (pp.13-23) is required as background to the theoretical statements concerning discourse analysis here.

[14]On discourse analysis, see Jonathan Potter, Peter Stringer and Margaret Wetherell, *Social Texts and Context: Literature and Social Psychology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984); Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell, *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour* (London: Sage, 1987); Sue Wilkinson and Celia Kitzinger (eds), *Feminism and Discourse: Psychological Perspectives* (London: Sage, 1995).

[15]For the specific way in which discourse has the ability to create and perpetuate certain concepts, see Potter, Stringer and Wetherell (n.14), pp.2, 93-94 and Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), p.212.

medium.[16]

To give just one example of how discourse analysis can be employed in studying art, Keuls estimates that there are over eight hundred representations in public and private artworks from Classical Antiquity of Amazons being defeated.[17] Whilst most of these depictions originate in Athens, some have also been found in other cities in Greece. Although the first ceramic artefact with this theme, a clay votive shield found at Tiryns, dates back to as early as 700 BC, there is abundant evidence for the theme from the end of the seventh century in Corinthian art (featuring Hercules), and increasingly in Athenian art from circa 570 BC Indeed, depictions of Amazons continued on into the late fifth century.[18] Although imagery on vases changed considerably during this time, there are clearly some stereotypical presentations of Amazons on vases, which will have informed later depictions.

During this period, as in the literary versions, art produced different situations for the Amazons in combat with different heroes such as Hercules, Theseus and Achilles. In all these depictions, however, some important similarities are to be found. For instance, while the Amazons valiantly challenge the heroes, they are seen to be ultimately beaten by them. The common theme in the images of Amazons fighting Hercules is the position of the figures. The images mostly depict Hercules' dominance as he leans over a much smaller, often fallen Amazon, who is down on one knee and protecting her upper torso, or actually supine, with a suggestively poised spear stretched down towards her torso.[19] This discourse of the Amazon creates her as a

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[16]See Potter, Stringer and Wetherell (n.14), pp.2, 79.

[17]Keuls (n.3), p.4.

[18]See John Boardman, 'Herakles, Theseus and Amazons', in *The Eye of Greece: Studies in the Art of Athens*, ed. by Donna Kurtz and Brian Sparkes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp.1-28 (p.7). For the terracotta votive shield, see the drawing and photo of Dietrich von Bothmer, *Amazons in Greek Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), plates 1a and 1b.

[19]e.g. *LIMC* 1.1, p.591, no.77, or *LIMC* 1.1, p.589, no.26.

dangerous but ultimately defeated enemy. It both perpetuates the negative stereotypical image of the female group, whilst at the same time maintaining the positive self-evaluation of the male group by the ultimate defeat of the representative of the other group.

Analysing the discourse of the female group in this way is a useful exercise as it illustrates that the stories about different female groups all coalesce around a few key themes. These themes demonstrate the presence of the stereotypical representation of the female group. More particularly, the first common theme, that of the strike-breaker in the female group, suggests that the female group (as opposed to the male group) lacks cohesion and is ill-disciplined, and thereby depicts the female group negatively. Second, the extermination or reabsorption of the female group demonstrates that the outgroup of women is ultimately no match for the ingroup of men: it is truly of a lower status and therefore justifies the current imbalanced power relations between men and women in Classical Athenian society.[20] And third, the depiction of a sanitized version of the group denies the threat implicit in the negative version of the female group, thus temporarily assuaging men's fears. The cycle of creation and destruction of the female group is continually repeated, however, when yet another example of the female group is converted in literature or art into the distorted image of the transgressive female group. The group is again rendered in stereotypical ways, again fosters anxiety, and, in order to confirm high self-regard of the male group, is again ultimately rendered harmless by being controlled or eliminated by its male creators.

Bearing in mind both the possible psychic impulses influencing the depiction of the female myths in Classical Greece and insights provided by discourse analysis for the depiction of the group, my investigation of the similarly constructed images and stories of the Amazons, Danaids and Lemnian women seeks to explain the significance of the transgressive female group for Classical Athens.

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[20]For an explanation of the terms 'outgroup' and 'ingroup' derived from social identity theory, see the Introduction (p.15).

(a) The Amazons: the model of female transgressors[21]

Of all the groups of women examined in this chapter, the Amazons are the most thoroughly documented. Such preeminence is hardly surprising as, even in ancient times, they clearly held a unique position. They were considered by Strabo, the geographer (64 BC - AD 21) to break through the normal boundary set up between the mythical and the historical. According to him, although the stories which were told in his time and earlier about the Amazons were beyond belief and contained elements of the marvellous, the legends were still credited with veracity (11.5.3.). In the Classical period, this quasi-historical construction of the Amazons is found in Lysias' *Funeral Oration* in 389 BC, in which he rebukes the Amazons for their unjust greed in attempting to conquer Attica (2.4-6). Equally, in Isocrates' *Panegyricus*, they are listed with the Persians and Thracians, as groups which have unsuccessfully led invasions against Attica (4.68). The Athenian defeat of the Amazons in Attica is cited by Herodotus as one of the justifications which Athens gives the Tegeans for her forces occupying a wing at the battle of Plataea. The defeat of the Amazons is cited along with such other hybrids of myth and history, as the Athenian protection of the Heraclidae; the recovery of the bodies of the seven from Thebes; the participation of Athens in the Trojan War; and finally, the historically verifiable Athenian stand at Marathon (Hdt. 9.27).

The unique status of the Amazons in turn requires some explanation, and critics have suggested that the Amazons represented much more than women when they were used as one of the great foes of Greece. Although Keuls highlights the argument of sexual antagonism between male and female, she claims that they were also clearly a symbol of tyranny opposed to democracy, and East versus West, especially as they became increasingly conflated with the barbarian (Persian) in art and

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[21]For some key texts on the Amazons in art and literature, see Josine H. Blok, *The Early Amazons: Modern and Ancient Perspectives on a Persistent Myth* (Leiden: Brill, 1995) and Bothmer (n.18).

literature.[22] For Keuls, the Amazon myth functioned as the charter myth of Athenian, and more precisely, patriarchal society (pp.4, 34, 44-47). The myth provided the historical justification for the treatment of women, as well as such other outsider figures as foreigners and slaves; indeed, for the treatment of all those alien groups outside the group of Athenian citizen males. Although Merck's thesis is broadly similar to Keuls', she places greater emphasis on the justification of *polis* ideology.[23] These

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[22]Keuls (n.3), p.34. While the Amazons were sometimes depicted in hoplite gear, they were also sometimes depicted with such oriental-style equipment and dress as geometrically-patterned clothing, trousers and long sleeves, wicker shields, pointed caps and carrying bows and arrows, rather than spears, which style continued to feature in their depiction throughout the fifth century, e.g. *LIMC* 1.1, p.591, no.64a-64b and *LIMC* 1.1, p.591, no.65. Some see this style of dress as transferring from the Persians to the Amazons, especially after the Persian Wars (550-480 BC). See, for instance, Donald J. Sobol, *The Amazons of Greek Mythology* (South Brunswick: Barnes; London: Yoseloff, 1972), p.108. Others see the oriental items becoming, in later red-figure technique, intensified and transferred from the Amazon to the Persian invader as the proliferation of oriental dress occurred in the second half of the sixth century before the Persian Wars. See Lorna Hardwick, 'Ancient Amazons - Heroes, Outsiders or Women?' *G&R*, 37 (1990), 14-36. In whichever direction the influence was felt, the first half of the fifth century saw Xerxes' warriors in costumes associated with the Amazons. Edith Hall describes at greater length the interaction between myth and history in the depiction of Amazons and other nations allegedly originating in the East, and the Persians. See Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition Through Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp.68-69, especially n.51, pp.102, and 134 (n.91). See also the work of Page Dubois, who conceives the Amazons as representing a prime example of the Athenian 'Other', which defines what an Athenian citizen is not, including here a barbarian: *Centaurs and Amazons: Women and the Pre-History of the Great Chain of Being* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982), see especially pp.25-80 and 49-77.

[23]Merck (n.3), p.96. Clearly *polis* ideology and patriarchal ideology were very closely allied. On many key public monuments at Athens, there were depictions of heroes fighting hostile forces such as Amazons, Centaurs, Giants, Persians and Spartans, so that women appear as one of the many 'Others' of the male Athenian citizen. This imagery, which would have been so publicly visible, presents the Amazons as a (sub)civilization completely inimical to Athens, attempting to attack the city; an alien group to be countered and subdued. Although the depictions often focus on one-to-one combat, it is clear that the Amazons as a foreign *force* are the real threat: the threat is implicit in their existence as a community, like the Persians, which could wage war and invade. See Bothmer (n.18) for more detailed studies of the Athenian Treasury at Delphi

two critics' comments are directed towards the Amazon myth in isolation. By exploring the key Amazon theme in the context of other mythic groups of women, however, it can be seen that, over and above its other symbolic functions, the Amazon theme clearly foregrounded also the transgressive nature inherent in a group of women.

The earliest literary source for the Amazons comes in Homer, where they are defeated by Bellerophon, one of whose labours was to kill the Amazons whose epithet was ἀντιάνειραι, commonly translated as 'a match for men' or 'equivalent to men' (*Il.* 6.186).[24] They appear in the narrative also at *Il.* 3.189 with the same epithet, when they are cited as having been opponents of the young Priam and a Phrygian force in a former time. A post-Homeric epic by Arctinus of Miletus called *Aethiopis* (seventh-sixth century BC), which has not survived, told the story of the Amazons at Troy, including the interaction between Achilles and Penthesilea. So it is clear that the mythic theme of the Amazon was established and available for allusion by the eighth century, and already the Amazons were women who were *unnatural* women, because they were like men. The Amazons were brought into contact with Hercules in a Hesiodic fragment before 700 BC, but they were not able to conquer such a hero and their tribe was utterly destroyed by him (fr.165 M-W). At the end of the sixth century, Athens adopted Theseus as its Hercules figure, and he was celebrated as the founder of the state and champion of the new democracy. Accordingly, he is accorded several feats of valour against the Amazons, and a new myth is born about the retaliatory invasion of Attica by the Amazons, repulsed by the new Attic hero.[25]

(pp.117-19); the western metopes of the Parthenon (pp.208-09); and the shield of Athena Parthenos (pp.209-14).

[24]See Blok (n.21), pp.155-85 for a detailed study of the term *Amazones antianeirai* as embodying an essential ambiguity in the sexuality of the Amazons..

[25]Plutarch recounts how Theseus systematically cleared the road from Troezen to Athens of the monsters and criminals who lived there, e.g. Procrustes and Sinis, in his own 'labours', modelled on Hercules' (*Vit. Thes.* 8-12), and it is noted that Theseus had always admired the bravery of Hercules, wanting to emulate, if not, surpass him

The folk etymologies for the name Amazon reveal much information about the way they were constructed. One etymological derivation suggested for their name, *a-mastos*, derives from the single-breasted nature of the Amazon, or, alternatively, the rearing of children away from the breast: both scenarios equally evocative of a brutal, unfeminine/unmaternal world.[26] Some other etymologies relate to such ideas as *a-maza* (without bread), *a-zona* (chastity-belt), *amazosas* (opposed to men). All these retrospective etymologies tell us important things about the stereotypic nature of Amazonian depiction, as they betray the unspoken agenda of the anti-female, underdeveloped civilization important to Classical constructions of the race.

The war-like but ultimately defeated Amazons continue through the literary and artistic tradition appearing each century in slightly different guises and stories. Three specific themes in their literary depiction, however, which are directly paralleled by similar themes in the constructions of the female groups of Danaids and Lemnians, repay closer study.

(6.7-9). Plutarch also comments on an earlier epic called *Theseis* (sixth century BC) in which it is described how Theseus was attacked by Antiope and the Amazons when they came to bring revenge on him after he had married Phaedra (28.1-2). Theseus is also represented as an Amazon-fighter, equal to Hercules fighting the Amazons' invasion of Attica on such famous Athenian monuments of the time as the *Stoa Poikile* (Paus. 1.15.2) and the sanctuary of Theseus in Athens (1.17.2). The scene also appeared, according to Pausanias, on the shield of Athena Parthenos and the foot-stool of Zeus at Olympia (5.11.7). The invasion of Attica by the Amazons is mentioned in Aeschylus's *Eumenides*. Here, the name of the Areopagus is explained as deriving from the time when the Amazons sacrificed to Ares on the rock used as a base to launch an attack on the Acropolis (685-90). Vase scenes of Amazonomachies with Theseus begin in the 460s, and completely replace Hercules on Attic ware by the mid-fifth century.

[26]There is some substantiation for the one-breasted Amazon theme in the Hippocratic Corpus where it is claimed that the women of the Sauromatae, descendants of the Amazons and Scythians, seared off the right breast of their infants to direct more strength to their right arm and shoulder (Hippoc. *Aer.* 17 = 2.66.17 L). Also Hellanicus, the fifth-century Ionian historian, explained the significance the Amazons' name by saying that their right breasts were removed by cauterization (fr.16 *FGrH* 3B p.45). The single-breasted Amazon is recorded in later tradition quite frequently (Diod. Sic. 2.45.3, but cf. Diod. Sic. 3.53.3).

(i) The strike-breaker in the female group

In all versions of the transgressive female group, we find the theme of the rebel in the group, who is presented as more feminine than the others, and does not uphold the ideas of the group. In the example of the Amazon group, this theme suggests that the group lacks cohesion, because one of the women does not follow the rules of the collective. This theme is intimately bound up with the attempt in discourse to challenge the validity of the female group, which is depicted as not as reliably cohesive as the male group. We find the theme of the rebel surfacing in stories of Hercules', Theseus's and Achilles' interaction with the Amazons.

The story of Hercules' ninth labour, obtaining the belt of Hippolyte, for example, is variously told in different sources. One theme depicts a confrontational encounter over the belt, where Hercules obtains the belt by violence.[27] In Apollonius, Melanippe is taken hostage by Hercules, and in order for her sister, Hippolyte to release her, she must hand over her famous belt, bestowed on her by Ares (2.966-69). In Diodorus, Hercules kills many of the most famous Amazon warriors, and finally gives Antiope as a gift to Theseus and sets Melanippe free in exchange for the belt (4.16.4). Elsewhere in Diodorus, Hercules takes her and her belt captive (2.46.4).[28]

A theme which vies with this one, is that Hippolyte was happy to give Hercules the belt, and thus was a traitor to the Amazon cause. For instance, in Apollodorus's

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[27]Hercules' *hostile* interaction with Amazons proved a very popular theme amongst depictions of Hercules' labours with over 400 black-figure vase paintings, second only in number to depictions of Hercules and the Nemean lion. See T. H. Carpenter, *Art and Myth in Ancient Greece: A Handbook* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1991), p.125, and, for a detailed exploration of Hercules' interaction with various Amazons, see Bothmer (n.18), pp.30-69. But there are not many early vase depictions clearly demonstrating Hercules using force to obtain Hippolyte's belt. Possibilities include a Laconian cup of 565-60 BC, where Hercules (?) is thought to be attempting to seize a fleeing Amazon by the waist (*LIMC* 1.1, p.587, no.2) and an Attic vase of circa 500 BC where Hercules holds a belt (?) over a collapsing Amazon (*LIMC* 1.1, p.591, no.70). Boardman (n.18), p.7 rejects this as a depiction of Hercules since he is wearing a helmet and *nebris* rather than the traditional lionskin.

[28]cf. also Pindar, fr.172, Snell, pp.126-27, Eur. *HF* 408-18, Paus. 5.10.9.

version, the leader of the Amazons was not as trenchant in her Amazonian beliefs and was willing to hand over the belt. Hercules is visited secretly by Hippolyte, who peaceably asks why he has come and promises to give him the belt. Hera then inspires the Amazons with the idea that Hercules is kidnapping their queen, so they attack him. Hercules, suspecting treachery from Hippolyte, thereupon kills her and takes the belt (Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.9). We have secure evidence for the more peaceful theme in literary discourse only after the fifth century, and it is difficult to say whether it reflects an earlier tradition or not. Gantz believes the later tradition may have been inspired by a fifth-century comedy by the Sicilian playwright Epicharmus called *Herakles Ho Epi Ton Zōstera*: 'Hercules after the Belt'.[29] But in art, at least, there were about a dozen examples of Hercules' peaceful encounter with an Amazon, who hands him the belt on Lucanian, Campanian and Apulian red-figure vases from circa 430 BC to the last quarter of the third century.[30] It is to be noted, however, that we do not have evidence of this theme occurring on Attic vases.

Although we do not have absolutely incontestable evidence of the 'strike-breaker' Amazon in the story of Hercules in the Classical period at Athens, the ideological pattern of the uncohesive female group emerges much more clearly in Classical Athens in the story of Theseus and the Amazons. Again there is ambiguity over whether Theseus had a violent encounter with a female Amazon figure, or whether she went over to his side willingly. In some versions the leader of the Amazons, who is called, variously, Antiope, Melanippe and Hippolyte, is violently abducted by Theseus, or given as a reward to him for accompanying Hercules to the camp of Amazons on the belt-quest.[31] Yet other versions show a more sanguine

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[29]Gantz (n.7), p.398. See *CGF*, fr.76, p.104.

[30]*LIMC* 5.1, p.73, no.2461, *LIMC* 1.1, p.634, no.778a.

[31]See Eur. *Heracl.* 215-19, Plut. *Vit. Thes.* 26, Diod. Sic. 4.16.4, Hyg. *Fab.* 30.10. For the abduction motif in art, see fragments from the west pediment of the temple of Apollo at Eretria from circa 510 BC, where Theseus lifts Antiope into his chariot in the midst of battle, in the presence of Athena. See John Boardman, *Greek Sculpture: The Archaic Period: A Handbook* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), fig.

Amazon. In Plutarch's account, various versions are recorded, some of which say that Hippolyte helped make a peace-treaty with the Amazons, on behalf of Theseus, and yet other versions say that she died fighting on Theseus's side from a javelin wound administered by her fellow Amazon, Molpadia (*Vit. Thes.* 27.5-6). In Diodorus, Hippolyte was said to have fought by Theseus's side at Athens against the Amazons and died 'like a hero', ἡρωικῶς (Diod. Sic. 4.28.4).

In the fourth-century writer Isocrates, it is stated quite plainly that the Amazons had come to reclaim their leader, called Hippolyte here, who had broken all the Amazonian laws by falling in love with Theseus and following him to Athens to live with him as a wife (Isoc. 12.193). This fourth-century reference is our earliest literary reference to this episode.[32]

Far from all Amazons being the epitome of the 'man-hater' στυγάνωρ, as Aeschylus describes them in *Prometheus Vinctus* (724), it appears that there are occasions when one of them sleeps with a man or falls in love, for a reason other than strictly to secure the future of the Amazon race. Another example of love between an Amazon and a Greek warrior is found in Achilles' interaction with the Amazons. The episode's origin presumably dates back to the *Aethiopis*, and is certainly apparent on several vases from the sixth century onwards. It features on the now famous black-figure vase of circa 540 BC signed by Exekias. Achilles is shown plunging his sword into Penthesilea as she falls and, at the moment of death, when they make eye contact,

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205.2 = *LIMC* 1.1, p.858, no.2. Theseus is featured carrying her onto his chariot on several black- and red-figure vases from the end of the sixth and the beginning of the fifth century, e.g. *LIMC* 1.1, p.858, no.9, and *LIMC* 1.1, p.858, no.10 (circa 510 BC). See Bothmer (n.18), pp.124-30 for further elaboration of this motif.

[32]Boardman (n.18), pp.24-25 states that Classical art does not know of a 'friendly Amazon' scene, with the possible exceptions of a vase on which an Amazon supports a young Greek who is attacking a mounted Amazon (*ARV* 616.3). There is another vase by the Niobid painter (circa 460-450 BC) showing an Amazon walking calmly behind a Greek, and beyond her, a chariot carrying an Amazon in (*ARV* 600.13). Neither of these examples is held by Boardman to refer unambiguously to Theseus and Antiope.

there appears to be some mutual recognition or respect.[33]

On a later vase, the erotic undertones are much more clearly in evidence. On the red-figure vase by the Penthesilea painter (circa 460 BC), Penthesilea had fallen on her knees before Achilles and is caressing his breast in a gesture of seduction. He appears to be moved by this, but too late, for he is already in the process of stabbing her in the breast.[34] The dying Penthesilea, supported by Achilles, was apparently also depicted in the temple of Zeus at Olympia (Paus. 5.11.6). These images of softened Amazons suggested the comforting thought to the Greek viewer that, however inhuman an Amazon may be, she is, after all, still a woman and thereby, weak. She will ultimately succumb, both in love and war, to the Greek male.

In the stories of the heroes facing the Amazons, the cohesion of the female group is thus gradually chipped away as the Amazons are accused of faithlessness to their cause and to each other. The theme of an odd-one-out is found in the story of the Danaids and Lemnians, as we shall see later. But it was an equally clear element in other accounts of female groups. The theme appears in the story of the Peliades, whom Medea persuades, bar one, Alcestis, to kill their father (Diod. Sic. 4.52.2). In Hyginus, she is the one daughter who doubts Medea, but she does carry out the deed after further proofs of Medea's witchcraft (*Fab.* 24.2-3). It is difficult to know how far back the theme of Alcestis as the one 'conscientious objector' goes. She is singled out in the *Iliad* as the most beautiful of Pelias' daughters (*Il.* 2.715), and the story of the daughters' unwitting murder of Pelias was most probably told in Athenian tragedy in Sophocles' *Rhizotomoi* (*TrGF* 4, frs 534-36, pp.410-11,), and Euripides' *Peliades* in 455 BC (*TGF*, frs 601-16, pp.550-54). We do not, however, have any fragments which are telling on this theme.

In visual art, however, there are quite a number of Attic vases with depictions of the Peliades. In some cases, the women stand and deliberate in a threesome, in other

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[33]*LIMC* 1.1, p.163, no.723.

[34]*LIMC* 1.1, p.164, no.733.

cases, two of them stand with Medea at a cauldron with or without a ram inside.[35] The earliest vases showing the attempt to rejuvenate Pelias date to the late Archaic period (circa 510-500 BC). One particular Attic red-figure hydria (circa 450 BC) shows three Peliades standing together. The Peliad in the centre has been identified as Alcestis by several critics. Her hand is raised to her cheek in horror as she looks towards the Peliad on the left who is brandishing a sword.[36] This suggests, at least, that some debate and disagreement between the sisters, concerning the rejuvenation of Pelias, was known from an early period. Whenever cauldron scenes appear on the vases, there are commonly only two Peliades; one or two Peliades and Medea; or these combinations with Pelias. When three Peliades occur on vases, they are found away from the cauldron, standing together in often quite animated conversation.[37] This could suggest that one militant Peliad was absent from the actual slaughter. As the vases listed above date from between circa 510 BC and 460 BC, it is possible that the theme of the rebellious act of Alcestis may well have been current in the Classical period.

In a slightly different example, the fifty daughters of Thespius, the Thespiades, had the job of sleeping every night with Hercules, who had come to their land on one of his labours and stayed for fifty days. The king wanted sons by him, but his command was rejected by one daughter (Anthea?) who refused to sleep with Hercules. It is told in Pausanias, that Hercules was so insulted that he condemned the girl to a lifetime of celibacy as a virgin priestess of his temple in Thespiae (9.27.6-7). There is no mention of the one rebel daughter in Diodorus or Apollodorus who both recount the story (Diod. Sic. 4.29.1-3, Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.4.10, 2.7.8). Again it is difficult to know whether Pausanias was drawing on an earlier myth of the rebel in the group, or

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[35]Erika Simon, 'Peliades', *LIMC* 7.1, pp.270-73, nos 4-13.

[36]*LIMC* 7.1, p.272, no.12.

[37]See one/two Peliades and/or Medea at cauldron, e.g. *LIMC* 7.1, pp.271-72, nos 4-8, and 11. For images as above including Pelias, see *LIMC* 7.1 ('Pelias') pp.274-76, nos 10-11, and 18. For three debating Peliades, see *LIMC* 7.1, p.272, nos 12-13. But compare 'Pelias' p.276, nos 19 and 21 which could depict three Peliades and Pelias at the cauldron.

whether he had conveniently used the common pattern, well-known in the Danaid and Lemnian stories, of the one-out-of-many disobeying a command. It seems likely, however, from these many hints, that, from as early as the Classical period, if not before, the general theme of the single strike-breaker in a group of women was portrayed as a common characteristic of female group (inter)action.

(ii) Reabsorption or extermination of the female group

The second theme which I propose is common to all three mythic groups of women - Amazons, Danaids and Lemnians - concerns the ultimate fate of the group. The women in each case have a clear choice: either to return to a mixed-sex group under male-control or, since the idea of women grouped without men is untenable, to disappear. In the case of the Amazons, Herodotus suggests that the Amazons eventually intermarried with the Scythians and created the Sauromatae race, which is recorded as preserving some of the Amazon customs (4.117). The women are thus reabsorbed into male dominated society or, as in our other sources, completely exterminated as a race. Isocrates gives a version of the Amazon attack on Athens saying that not one Amazon returned home alive. Those Amazons who had been left at home were expelled from power because of the disaster at Athens (Isoc. 4.70). Lysias concurs with this view, stating that the Amazons were completely eradicated after their attempt on Athens and rendered their country nameless (Lys. 2.6). And also in their encounters with Hercules, their nation was said to have been entirely destroyed: *παντελῶς τὸ ἔθνος αὐτῶν συντριβῆναι* (Diod. Sic. 4.16.4), and *τὸ ἔθνος τοῦτο τελέως συντρῖψαι* (Diod. Sic. 2.46.4).

Diodorus also recounts how Hercules had eradicated a much earlier Amazon tribe, which predated the commonly known ones, along with a tribe of women warriors called the Gorgons living in Libya. He decided to destroy them because it did not seem right for him as chief benefactor to mankind to allow any race to be ruled by women (Diod. Sic. 3.55.3). Once again, the stereotypical depiction of the female group is that it is ultimately defeated as a nation and incapable of remaining in control for a sustained period. This image of the female group thus justifies the control of

women by men.[38]

(iii) The sanitized version of the female group

The third theme which is paralleled in the Danaid and Lemnian stories is the way in which the female group is treated in ambivalent ways. Often there is a counter-myth concerning the female group, a sanitized version, which treats them as more amiable than in the well-known versions. The counter-myth of the female group offered a more acceptable version of the frightening women, which assuaged men's fears and offered them a reflection of a more ordered world, in which transgressive women are either not as bad as their reputations, or simply do not exist. The threat of the female group is thus eliminated.

Concerning the Amazons, there are two mythic treatments of their battle prowess: sometimes they are praised for it, and at other times, condemned. As a fighting body, the Amazons are often accorded valour and the capability of offering men battle on an equal footing. Even for Homer, they are 'peers of men' (*Il.* 6.186). They may not be a match for heroes, but they are 'in no way inferior to men' also in later writers, (e.g. Diod. Sic. 2.44.1).

In fact, this prowess in war seems to be the only flattering thing in the Amazons' portrayal. In Apollodorus they are 'a nation skilled in war' *ἔθνος μέγα τὰ κατὰ πόλεμον* (*Bibl.* 2.5.9). According to Diodorus, they conquered the area around the river Thermodon and subdued nations as far as Thrace due to their good

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[38]Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* exemplifies this theme, where the women are focused not on their normal role in the family group, but on the actions of a female collective operating on the Acropolis, which they had seized, as the Amazons had seized the Areopagus. When they achieve their goal, the cessation of the Peloponnesian War, however, they return to the domestic group and live again under the male rule which had caused the war. There are many direct and more allusive references to the Amazons in the play (e.g. 674-79), which as Bowie notes, indicate that the Amazon model was clearly in Aristophanes' mind. For a careful study of the allusions to Amazon and Lemnian myths in *Lysistrata,* see A. M. Bowie, *Aristophanes: Myth, Ritual and Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), Chapter 8. For further consideration of women in Aristophanes, see Chapter 3 of my dissertation.

fighting order τῆς εὐταξίας (2.45.4), until they finally met a hero of the calibre of Hercules who is said to have left the tribe so ravaged that it was easy prey to neighbouring peoples, and was completely exterminated (2.46.3-4). Plutarch comments that the invasion of Attica seems to have been no trivial or womanish enterprise for Theseus to contend with: φαῦλον or γυναικεῖον [...] τὸ ἔργον (*Vit. Thes.* 27.1).

This sentiment of fearful respect, however, is not apparent in the account of Apollonius, who depicts the Amazons in a wholly negative way due to their fighting abilities. He only records their lawlessness and bloodthirsty nature. Being daughters of Ares and Harmonia, their chief characteristic is of 'grievous *hubris* and the works of Ares', and they are described as 'warloving maidens' (*Argon.* 2.985-92). Herodotus prefaces his account of the Amazons with the linguistic comment that the Scythian name for the Amazons, 'Oiorpata', means ἀνδροκτόνοι, 'killers of men', from Scythian 'oior' meaning 'man' and 'pata' meaning 'to kill' (4.110).

Sometimes the versions differ so much that it becomes apparent that there has been a conscious attempt to depict the group in a radically different way, and as a less frightening group. Herodotus describes the man-slaying Amazons as encouraging Scythian men to mate with them, and eventually settling down with them to form the Sauromatae nation (4.113-16). Admittedly, the Amazons continued living an unconventional life with their Scythian husbands, riding on horseback, hunting, taking part in war, and wearing men's clothes, because, they claimed, they could never live as Scythian women, occupied only with domestic tasks (4.114-16). Nevertheless, when the Amazons settle down with a nation of men, they are accorded a legitimacy previously absent from their reputation as an exclusively female group.

Another example of this creation of a less frightening group of Amazons is found in Diodorus. He attempts an explanation for the heroic reputation of the known Amazons by distinguishing between good Amazons and bad Amazons. He claims that the Amazons from the Black Sea at the river Thermodon (the bad Amazons) that feature in most of the negative stereotyping we have discussed, adopted the reputation for being splendid fighters from earlier good Amazons who lived in western Libya

(3.52.2). These Amazons lived and died before the Trojan War, and so were not remembered by any living men (3.52.1-2). According to Diodorus, there were many races of women in Libya who were μάχιμα and τεθαυμασμένα μεγάλως ἐπ' ἀνδρείᾳ, 'warlike' and 'greatly admired for their courage' (3.52.4). One of these groups was the Gorgons, with whom the Amazons of former times were often at war (3.52.4). The Amazons lived on the boundaries of the inhabited world, on the western edge of Libya. They lived with men and had children, but kept the governance of all public affairs, while their husbands did not take any part in war, politics, or the rule of the community. In fact, the customary gender roles of the fifth century were entirely reversed (3.53.1-3). But the community was relatively peaceful. The women undertook great campaigns, led by Myrina throughout Asia, but made alliances of peace as well as war (3.54.5-6).

Diodorus claims that these Amazons also were completely eradicated by Hercules, along with the Gorgons, on his way to set up the famous pillars (3.55.3). Since Diodorus recorded that the (bad) Amazons at Themiscyra had also been finally crushed by Hercules (4.16.4), one suspects some confusion here. His attempt, however, to separate out one group of Amazons as honest and heroic, from the known group which were proud and haughty (2.45.2), is indicative of the highly-charged Amazon legacy. It evoked a sense of fear in the male group. Counter-versions of the myth, which were more palatable, appear to have been circulated to assuage fears of the female collective.

The Amazons clearly represented a psychological threat of some magnitude to Greek civilization, especially at Athens, since the three most significant heroes in Greek myth - Hercules, Theseus and Achilles - were despatched in various mythic versions to conquer them. In many of the versions of the Amazons, however, we find stories that negatively depict the Amazons, while reducing their importance as a collective threat. The recurrence of the three themes suggests a social and/or psychological need to treat the threat of the exclusively female group in certain ways that would safeguard the integrity of the male group.

(b) The Danaids in literature and art

The theme of the fifty Danaids who kill their fifty newly-wed husbands is a striking and notorious one in ancient sources. Apart from the very famous version by Aeschylus in his Danaid trilogy of which we only have the first play, *Supplices* (463 BC), and titles of the other two, *Αἰγύπτιοι*, *Δαναίδες*, and the satyr play, *Ἀμυμώνη* (*TrGF* 3, fr.70, pp.54-55 and *TrGF* 1, Did.C. 6, pp.44-45), we know of a post-Homeric epic entitled *Danais*, of some 6,500 verses, and have a fragment which suggests that the Danaids have a similar martial quality to the Amazons (Bernabé, *PEG* frs 1-3, pp.121-22). We have fragments or citations of various other versions, including a large piece from Melanippides, the dithyrambic poet from fifth-century Melos, who wrote a *Δαναίδες*, where the women, rather like Amazons again, deny their femininity, by hunting and riding in chariots (Page, *PMG* fr.757, p.392).

Apart from in Aeschylus, the Danaids featured in other Athenian tragedies and comedies too. The tragic playwright Phrynichus, who predated Aeschylus, wrote an *Αἰγύπτιοι* and a *Δαναίδες* (*TrGF* 1, fr.1, p.69, cf. schol. Eur. *Or.* 872), and the names of two tragedies have survived by Timesitheus (date unknown) entitled *Δαναίδες* (*TrGF* 1, fr.214, p.324). There was a comedy by Aristophanes on the Danaid theme which, according to Keuls, may have been written as another play of female rebellion, voicing dismay at the reinforcements sent out to join the Sicilian expedition in 414 BC (Kassel-Austin, *PCG* 3.2, frs 256-76, pp.148-57).[39] And there was also a comedy written on the same theme by the playwright of New comedy, Diphilus (Kassel-Austin, *PCG* 5, fr.24, p.63). The Danaids enter many other works throughout the Classical period and beyond, yet there is nothing uniform and straightforward about the Danaid story, as the sources differ on virtually every point.

That said, four elements seem essential to most versions: two Egyptian brothers, Danaus and Aegyptus, have respectively fifty daughters and fifty sons. They quarrel and Danaus takes his daughters to Argos. The offspring marry, and on the wedding night, the women kill their husbands, except one woman, Hypermestra, who

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[39]See Eva Keuls' entry, 'Danaides', in *LIMC* 3.1, pp.337-41 (p.337).

spares her husband, Lynceus.[40] The motive for the killing; the general level of guilt attributed to the women in the story, in comparison with the father; the motive of Hypermestra's clemency; and the consequences of the women's actions, all vary from narration to narration. These are all key points in our study of the group, as they establish to a greater or lesser degree the autonomy and cohesiveness of the female group.

The traditional quarrel between Danaus and his brother is not mentioned in Aeschylus's *Supplices* as in Apollodorus and other sources,[41] nor are we led to expect from the extant play a clear injunction on the part of Danaus to his daughters to kill their husbands as there is in some other sources (see here n.48). These choices may have been made by Aeschylus specifically to depict a group of transgressive women, lacking male control, in the mould of the Amazons. There has been much critical debate on the reasons why the Danaids reject marriage with their cousins so vehemently in Aeschylus's version.[42]

The Danaids make it clear in the play that marrying would violate some sacred law (36-39), as to marry would be ἀσεβής (9), and Danaus says that his nephews would pollute the race (225). There was no law of incest against intermarriage of cousins in ancient Greece or Egypt, so this is unlikely to be the law referred to. Garvie suggests that the Danaids might be devotees of Artemis, and so adhere to a law of chastity, but he does not believe that the reference to them looking like Amazons (287) can be understood literally.[43] The reference to Amazons is interesting in its own right, however, as it suggests that Aeschylus is developing the Danaids on the model of the

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[40]A. F. Garvie, *Aeschylus' 'Supplices': Play and Trilogy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p.164.

[41]Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.1.4, Eur. *Or.* 871-73, Serv. *Aen.* 10.497, Hyg. *Fab.* 168, schol. Eur. *Hec.* 886.

[42]This debate is usefully reviewed by Keuls in Eva Keuls, *The Water Carriers in Hades: A Study of Catharsis through Toil in Classical Antiquity* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1974), Chapter 4.

[43]Garvie (n.40), p.215.

Amazons, as a transgressive female group. Wilamowitz inspired this particular argument about the Amazonian connection by highlighting that the women rejected the men 'through inborn hatred of men' (aus angeborener Männerfeindschaft), which is how he translated *αὐτογενῆ φυξανορίαν* (8).[44] Wilamowitz's gloss has been disputed by Garvie, who cites just as many negative references about marriage with these specific men as marriage in general, (in general: 144ff, 392-93, 426, 528, 643, 790, 798-99, 804-07, 818, etc.), and where hostility is confined to the sons of Aegyptus: 30, 80, 104, 223ff, 335, 741, 750, 817, 1063).[45]

According to Keuls, the women are opposed to what is a *forced* marriage, and what naturally grows out of their anger and upset at this force is an apparent hostility to all marriage (39, 392-93, 798, 1031-32, *hybris*: 30, 81, 104, 426, 528, 817, 881).[46] As far as Keuls is concerned, the play does not depict the Danaids as particularly suited to the role of 'manless, meat-eating Amazons' as they are once styled (287-88), since they voice such sentiments as their feminine weakness (748-49) and need to be told by Danaus to guard against provoking the advances of the Argive men (996-1013) (Keuls, p.64). The play is, according to Keuls, another example of Aeschylus's explorations of the problem of *hybris* and the danger of a mortal's crass assertion of what he considers his inalienable right (p.67).

Whether the Danaids reject marriage with certain men or with all men, such a decision is momentous. Although Danaus, in Aeschylus's version, agrees with his daughters' position, he does not appear to be the one who forces them to reject marriage. Garvie has already noted that the father's position is subordinate to, or at least inseparable from, his daughters' collective will.[47] He is not depicted as a particularly strong-willed character, and whilst he only once expresses a reproving

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[44]Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff, *Aischylos, Interpretationen* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1914), p.15

[45]Garvie (n.40), p.221.

[46]Keuls (n.42). p.65.

[47]Garvie (n.40), p.171.

comment about the suitors, the Danaids, by contrast, perpetually denigrate them (222-31).

In some other sources, however, Danaus is the master-mind behind the plot and in some versions, he even goes so far as to put the weapons in the girls' hands.[48] In order to highlight the autonomy of the group, Aeschylus has deliberately suppressed the theme of the argument between the brothers and Danaus's charge to his daughters to do the murderous deed. In this way, the general motif of the dangerous, man-slaying female group, already well-established at the time of Aeschylus, became his main focus. By foregrounding this theme, Aeschylus could have been reacting to the popular demand for the negative presentation of the female group, thus bringing to light once more the dual obsession of his society: anxiety about, and fascination with, the transgressive female group.

The same three themes, which are paralleled in the depictions of the Amazons and Lemnians, recur in the depiction of the Danaids.

(i) The strike-breaker in the female group

All of the group, apart from one member, keep a firm resolve to kill the newly-wed husbands. Hypermestra, however, does not kill Lynceus. The various strands of explanation for this all involve the assumption that she took an active decision to defy the group action, rather than was too afraid when the moment of murder arrived. We are now becoming familiar with this theme as a potential male construction of the unstable female group. In some versions, she falls in love with Lynceus.[49] In yet others, she spares Lynceus, because he had spared her virginity (Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.1.5, schol. Pind. *Nem.* 10.10). In Ovid's *Heroides*, Hypermestra is horrified at the act and claims in a letter to Lynceus that her maiden hands know nothing of weapons and are much

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[48]Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.1.5, schol. Eur. *Hec.* 886, schol. Aesch. *PV* 853, Hyg. *Fab.* 168.4, Ov. *Her.* 14.53-54, Hor. *Carm.* 3.11.39-40, 45-47.

[49]Aesch. *PV* 865-69, schol. Aesch. *PV* 853, schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 9.195, schol. Eur. *Hec.* 886.

more suited to the distaff and wool (14.65-66).[50] The versions describing Hypermestra's motivations may arguably say more about the social preoccupations of the particular periods in which they were written, but the fact that her rebellion against the group norm was known to Pindar and Aeschylus identifies an early version of the theme of the 'strike-breaker' in the Danaid myth.

(ii) The reabsorption or extermination of the female group

There exist two contradictory versions of the consequences of the Danaids' actions, yet, in both scenarios, the idea of women's destructive group action is not allowed to stand for long, before the women are punished or taken back under the control of men. First, in some versions, Lynceus returns, kills Danaus and his daughters, apart from Hypermestra, and then becomes king of Argos and ancestor of the royal Argive line. There is a Hesiodic reference to this possibly in fr.129 M-W.[51] The women are then punished in the underworld for eternity by pouring water into leaky *pithoi*. This variant is especially popular with post-Classical sources.[52]

The punishment of the Danaids clearly became a popular theme, for apart from a handful of vases possibly showing images of the Danaids engaged in their violent crime (see p.64 here), there are, on the other hand, a far greater number of more reassuring images of the Danaids being punished for their crime or expiating their deed. We have many depictions of youthful women pouring water into a leaky *pithos* in the underworld, which can all be dated after circa 350 BC on Italian vases and monuments (cf. *LIMC* 3.1, pp.338-340, nos 7-23, 33-40). The vases showing this general theme of women engaging in a water-carrying rite of expiation cannot,

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[50]See the early article by Campbell Bonner which lucidly debates the variant versions of the myth: Campbell Bonner, 'A Study of the Danaid Myth', *HSPh*, 13 (1902), 129-73.

[51]In one version, it appears that Danaus was formally prosecuted by Aegyptus for the killing of his sons (cf. Eur. *Or.* 871-73 and scholia there).

[52]Hor. *Carm.* 3.11, 21-24, Tib. 1.3, 79-80, Ov. *Met.* 4.462-63, Serv. *Aen.* 10.497 and Hyg. *Fab.* 168.5.

however, be indisputably linked to the Danaids.[53] The coalescence of the theme of the water-carriers and the Danaid myth can only be attested securely in literary sources and monuments at the beginning of the Roman Empire, to which theme we return (p.65).[54] In the second reabsorption/extermination scenario attested for the Classical period, the women are purified by Athena and Hermes and are married off to suitors who compete for them in foot races.[55] So they are again returned to normal heterosexual society and the control of men.

(iii) The sanitized version of the female group

In some instances, the Danaids represent the epitome of evil, as Amazon-style man-killers, and in others, their beneficial acts are stressed, for example, they play water nymphs who bring nourishing liquid to the arid Argolid. The version of the unruly, autonomous and Amazonian Danaids is possibly demonstrated in the sixth-century epic *Danais* and Melanippides' version from the fifth century (cf. p.58 here). In *Prometheus Vinctus,* Aeschylus also highlighted the theme of the Danaid women as a transgressive murderous group. When Prometheus predicts the future of Argos at 853ff, he talks of the nighttime bloodshed by female hands which will overthrow male pride (860-61). Athenian tragedy, at least, recognized the Danaid crime as being equally terrifying as the Lemnian crime, which was given precedence in *Choephoroe*.

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[53]Keuls (n.42), pp.4, 43-45, 83-103.

[54]Keuls (42), pp.117-58 (on Roman monuments), and p.44, Keuls disputes the use of citing as the first attested source for the coalescence of the two themes the Pseudo-Platonic dialogue *Axiochus,* in which the water-carriers in Hades are called Danaids (371e). It is not easily dated: all that can be said about it is that it was written after Plato and before Diogenes Laertius who lists it as a spurious work in the Platonic corpus (3.62.20). Keuls suggests, therefore, that it could be a Roman work dating from later than the first century BC. Keuls cites such works as Hor. *Carm.* 3.11, 21-24 and Tib. 1.3, 79-80, as the earliest to combine the water-carrying and the Danaid myths (p.45).

[55]Pind. *Pyth.* 9.112-16, schol. Pind. *Pyth.* 9.195, Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.1.5, Paus. 3.12.2.

Like that crime, the Danaids' crime is considered to be the most abominable evil, and is used as a measure to rate Hercules' slaughter of his wife and children (Eur. *HF* 1016-18). In *Hecuba* (886-87), Euripides connects the crimes of these two groups, as the best examples of women's strength and transgressive abilities.

In works of art, according to *LIMC*, there are no unambiguous depictions of the Danaids carrying out their grisly crime, but there are a couple of possibilities: fragments from an Apulian bell-krater found near Taranto depict men reclining on beds with women hovering round them with swords, which have been dated to circa 375-350 BC (*LIMC* 3.1, p.338, no.5). There is also the uncertain fragment of a chalice from circa 575-550 BC where a woman (a Danaid?) is holding the severed head of one of the slaughtered husbands about to be buried at Lerna (*LIMC* 3.1, p.340, no.32). With this emphasis in literature on the transgressive nature of the Danaids and the potential reflection of this theme in art, albeit not in Attic art, it must have been extremely disconcerting to the ancient Greek audience when Herodotus claimed that a group of murderous women had brought the rites of Demeter Thesmophoros to Greece. So behind a state-sanctioned and very important festival in many cities in Greece - the epitome of obedient female collective behaviour for the benefit of both city and country - lurked a murderous female collective (2.171).[56]

As we have seen, the theme of the Danaids' expiation of their deed appears

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[56]This is a good example of the construction of the women-only festival as something inherently dangerous and subversive. It seems that women could not even group together for religious purposes without inadvertently inciting very negative representations of their (inter)action. Chapter 4 describes the gruesome male-generated stories of violent female behaviour at women-only festivals and other female gatherings. On the possibility of the Thesmophoria festival being established in the last play of Aeschylus's trilogy to appease and offer ritual compensation to the Danaids, just as the founding of the cult of the Eumenides appeased the Erinyes, see especially Robertson and Zeitlin: D. S. Robertson, 'The End of the *Supplices* Trilogy of Aeschylus', *CR*, 38 (1924), 51-53, Froma I. Zeitlin, 'Patterns of Gender in Aeschylean Drama: *Seven Against Thebes* and the Danaid Trilogy', in *Cabinet of the Muses: Essays on Classical and Comparative Literature in Honor of Thomas G. Rosenmeyer*, ed. by Mark Griffith and Donald J. Mastronarde (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), pp.103-15 (pp.111-12), and Froma I. Zeitlin, 'The Politics of Eros in the Danaid trilogy of Aeschylus', in Zeitlin (n.10), pp.123-71 (pp.164-69).

only indisputedly in later art, and has been fully documented by Keuls. It constitutes the artistic representation of a sanitized version of the Danaids, in as much as they are shown to repent or be punished for their crime. Whilst this version suggests which aspect of the myth appealed to the later period, the artistic theme could equally have been drawn from some early, but lost literary sources, where the Danaids are represented as good. Keuls, moreover, argues that the later representation of the Danaids as water-carriers in the Underworld reflects the lost plays in the Danaid trilogy of Aeschylus, where, she believes, the Danaids were purified by the rite of the pierced *pithos*.[57]

Looking more broadly at possible sanguine representations of Danaids, there are several hints both earlier and later in myths, that Danaus and his daughters played honourable roles in the legendary history of the Argolid, in which the notoriety of their murderous deed is underplayed. For instance, a reference to the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* suggests that the Danaids were beneficent water-bringers to the arid Argolid, and, 'Danaus moistened Argos which was without water'.[58] In Strabo, Danaus was credited with having discovered a number of springs in Argive territory (8.6.8). For in the Argolid, according to Pausanias, Poseidon had made the waters of the land

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[57]Keuls (n.42), pp.6, 57, 70 cites as evidence *Supplices* 1024-29 (see 1022-29), where the Danaids announce that they will forsake the waters of the Nile in their hymns and honour only the prolific rivers of Argos. Their song of blessing suggests that they will transfer the fertile powers of the Nile to the dry land of Argos. The large fragment from the third play spoken by Aphrodite is also significant. The goddess describes the fertilization of the earth by the rain in positive terms, reflecting the human sexual act (*TGF*, fr.44, p.16). Keuls wonders if there is an implicit reference to the Eleusinian Mysteries here, which brings about the fertility of both earth and humankind. Although, with the connection between the Danaids and the Thesmophoria in Herodotus, one could suggest that the instigation of this Demeter rite might have been a more appropriate ending to the trilogy. I agree with Keuls when she suggests that the fragment above indicates that Aeschylus availed himself of the more positive image of the Danaids as water nymphs and mystic figures who were purified of their deed by a specific rite of *katharmos* consisting in water-carrying.

[58]fr.128 M-W. cf. the following for the connection between the Danaids and rivers and springs, Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.1.4, and schol. Hom. *Il.* 4.171c.

completely disappear, apart from at the spring of Lerna, because the river Inachus had bestowed upon Hera, rather than on him, the rule of the land (Paus. 2.15.5). Amymone, one of the daughters of Danaus, whose name is the title of the satyr play in Aeschylus's tetralogy, was singled out amongst the Danaids for especial fame in the watering of the Argolid motif. For she was sent out by Danaus to search for water in the parched land, and after being saved from a salacious satyr by Poseidon, was impregnated by the god himself. As a compensation for her loss of virginity, Poseidon showed her the spring at Lerna or created the spring for her.[59]

Apart from the connection with the watering of Argos, the race of Danaus seems to have been considered quite distinguished in the history of Argos in other respects. For it is said that, after Danaus had been *the most powerful king* of the city (Paus. 10.10.5), he was succeeded by Lynceus (Paus. 2.16.1, Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.2.1). Danaus's name was connected with the Homeric Danaans, and he became the eponymous founder of the Danaan or Argive peoples.[60] As in the case of the Amazons, then, we find that there existed two constructions of the Danaids in circulation, one which maximized their transgression, and the other which minimized anything destructive in the women's actions, and focused on a more positive image of them. This duality again attempted to come to terms with the threat presented in the image of the female group depicted as capable of carrying out heinous crimes.

(c) The women of Lemnos[61]

There is evidence that the theme of the Lemnian women was taken up frequently in fifth- and fourth-century Athenian tragedy and comedy. In tragedy, we know that

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[59]Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.1.4, Hyg. *Fab.* 169.3 Serv. *Aen.* 4.377.

[60]*TGF*, fr.228, pp.427-28, Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.1.4, Paus. 7.1.6-7.

[61]There is only one potential vase depiction of a Lemnian scene suggested in *LIMC*. This shows possibly Hypsipyle with Argonauts on Lemnos (*LIMC* 8.1, p.647, no.1).

Sophocles wrote a *Λήμνιαι*,[62] and that Euripides wrote a play called *Hypsipyle* (circa 409-407 BC) which would have focused on the story of Hypsipyle after she fled from Lemnos when she took up her post as nursemaid in the house of Lycurgus.[63] Aeschylus also wrote a *Λήμνιαι*/*Λήμνιοι* (*TrGF* 3, frs 123a-123b, pp.233-34) and a Hypsipyle.[64] Gantz suggests that *Hypsipyle* and a *Λήμνιαι* or *Λήμνιοι* formed two plays in Aeschylus's Argo tetralogy.[65]

Equally, the Lemnian women theme was apparently a popular theme for comedy, since we know of a *Λήμνιαι* by Nikochares and Antiphanes, both comic playwrights of Middle comedy.[66] And also, we have information about a *Λήμνιαι* from the poet of New comedy, Diphilus, and a *Λημνία* from Alexis, who spanned Middle and New comedy.[67] The theme of the separation of the sexes and a utopian take-over of women was a predictably popular comic trope: Aristophanes in *Lysistrata* alludes to the Lemnian fire which the women on the Acropolis are producing (*Lys.* 299). And indeed, we know that Aristophanes himself wrote a *Λήμνιαι*.[68]

The reputation of the Lemnians in many sources, however, is far from comic. Apart from the articulation of the Lemnians' crime in the *Choephoroe* as the ultimate paradigm of female wickedness, *γοᾶται δὲ δημόθεν κατάπτυστον*, 'bewailed by the community, detestable' (631-32), Pindar describes the deed as one simply of

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[62]*TrGF* 4, frs 384-89, pp.336-38, cf. schol. Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.769-73.

[63]See G. W. Bond (ed.), *Euripides: 'Hypsipyle'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. v, 147-49. This story is told by several other sources (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.4, Hyg. *Fab.* 15.5, 74, and Paus. 2.15.2 (without name of Hypsipyle mentioned)).

[64]*TrGF* 3, frs 247-48, p.352, cf. schol. Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.769-73.

[65]Gantz (n.7), p.345.

[66]Respectively, Kassel-Austin, *PCG* 7, frs 14-17, pp.46-47, and Kassel-Austin, *PCG* 2, frs 142-43, pp.388-89.

[67]Respectively, Kassel-Austin, *PCG* 5, frs 53-54, p.82, and Kassel-Austin, *PCG* 2, fr.139, p.99.

[68]Kassel-Austin, *PCG* 3.2, frs 372-91, pp.207-14.

'man-slaying women', γυναικῶν ἀνδρόφονων (*Pyth.* 4.252). And, due to a recent atrocity in Lemnos as well as the former deed, when the women killed all the men, Herodotus explained that any truly heinous crime is called commonly a 'Lemnian deed' (6.138.4). For early knowledge of the myth, we can look to Homer. In the *Iliad*, the story of the birth of a son, Euneos, to Jason and Hypsipyle presupposes the knowledge of the Argonauts calling in at Lemnos on their adventure, and hence, surely, also of the episode of female murder (*Il.* 7.469, 23.747). Some critics believe that the Lemnian episode must have been part of the *Argonautica* tradition dating back to at least the eighth century.[69]

Although individual details of the Lemnian episode are attested from Pindar onwards, the fullest outline of the Lemnian story is found only later in Apollonius Rhodius's *Argonautica.* The women of Lemnos enrage Aphrodite by not honouring her for a long time and she causes their husbands to conceive a passion for Thracian slave-girls. Apollodorus adds that Aphrodite afflicted the women with a terrible odour which drove their husbands away from them.[70] Hypsipyle, the queen, explains to the visiting Jason that their own children were being dishonoured, because bastards were being brought up in their homes, and unmarried Lemnian women were being left to age without any marriage offers. She neglects to tell him that, as a result, the women killed all the men on the island, but rather, she untruthfully relates that the men moved to Thrace (Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.799-826). In reality, of course, the women had previously, conspired together and eradicated the entire male population of the island, apart from one man, Thoas, the king, who was saved by his daughter, Hypsipyle (Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.620-21).[71] And the Argonauts are persuaded by the women to stay to

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[69]See G. L. Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry from Eumelos to Panyassis* (London: Faber and Faber, 1969), pp.60-79 (especially pp.60-61).

[70]Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.17, cf. schol. Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.609-15.

[71]The scholiast here says that the women, as well as killing the entire male population on the island, also killed all the Thracian slave girls, in fear that their children might grow up and desire vengeance for the killing of their fathers (schol. Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.609-15).

repopulate the island with children. In versions other than that of Apollonius, it is made explicit that Hypsipyle's rebellious act of saving her father is found out by the women, who attempt to kill her, so she flees the island and ends up in Nemea serving Lycurgus, where she is the focus of further adventures (Hyg. *Fab.* 74, Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.4).

The three themes that occur with regularity in the female group depictions of the Amazons and Danaids, occur in the Lemnian story also.

(i) The strike-breaker in the female group

Hypsipyle is the single Lemnian female who goes against the group action of the women on the island, thereby proving that, unlike the male group, the female group is neither well-organized nor disciplined. The fact that she saves her father, the only male to survive the massacre, is a common element in many versions of the story.[72] It is elaborated most fully in Apollonius, where it is told that he is saved by being put in a chest and cast out to sea (Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.622). He is found later by fisherman.[73] Interestingly, the group is portrayed as being quite militant in its reaction to Hypsipyle's betrayal. When the women find out that Hypsipyle has saved Thoas, they kill him and sell her into slavery (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.6.4), or, as in Hyginus's version, they attempt to kill her, forcing her to flee (Hyg. *Fab.* 15.5).

These two sources which record Hypsipyle as being the rebel in the group are relatively late, but we have a clear reference in Euripides' fifth-century play *Hypsipyle* to this effect also. A fragment of this play has Hypsipyle telling Euneos and

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[72]Herodotus makes a point of saying that all the men, *including* Thoas were killed (Hdt. 6.138.4). Herodotus clearly would not have stressed this specific point, however, unless there were stories current in his time which included the theme of a single male survivor.

[73]Compare the version of Valerius Flaccus (AD 1) in which Thoas, the son of Dionysus, is led to the temple of Dionysus on the night of the murder. On the next day, dressed as the god with a wig, wreath, and garments, he is led by Hypsipyle, clad as a Bacchant, through the town and down to the seashore to freedom (*Argonautica* 2.242ff). It is unclear how much this late version owes to an earlier tradition.

Amphiareus that she left Lemnos on account of her sparing her father in the massacre.[74] This reference suggests that Hypsipyle as the rebel in the group was known as a theme at least as early as the fifth century.

(ii) The reabsorption or extermination of the female group

Concerning the second theme in the Lemnian context, the women move from a conventional society of both men and women, through a period of life in a single-sex world, in which they easily rule and run the entire island without men, to a resumption of heterosexual activity and the reabsorption of their single-sex group back into patriarchy. The female group is shown, thereby, as weak and not able to maintain life on its own, and the justification for male control over women is thus provided. During the period of their female autonomy, however, the women are depicted as running Lemnos effortlessly. In Apollonius, the women find it easy to adapt to the hard labour usually carried out by the men (Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.627-30). They organize themselves into a fully-functioning *polis*, as if there were nothing unusual about their island. In earlier versions, they organize a footrace for the Argonauts, and their queen, Hypsipyle is the one who gives out the prizes (Pind. *Ol.* 4.26-27, *Pyth.* 4.252-53). In Apollonius, the women gather in the assembly to discuss matters and democratically decide on their course of action (Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.656, 1.670, 1.673). Lemnos is portrayed very much as an island run by women in the mould of territory run by the tribe of Amazons: γυναικοκρατουμένη (Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.17).

The self-sufficient society is not allowed to exist for long, however, and the island returns to conventionality again when the Argonauts sail to Lemnos on their journey to Colchis and stay with the Lemnian women for an indefinite period sowing their seed (Pind. *Pyth.* 4.253-54). Admittedly, it is at the behest of the women that the Argonauts stay with them and replenish their population but, in some versions, the services of the men are requested out of a pure need for survival rather than any

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[74]See Bond (n.63), pp.v, 7, 46-48, and fr.64, (especially p.47, fr.64, lines 72-78).

romantic interest. The women fear that either the population will die out, or that there may be an invasion by Thracians.[75] At the same time, the excessive delight of the women at the arrival of the Argonauts and the women's ready acceptance of the men in their beds is explained by Apollonius as a ploy by Aphrodite on behalf of Hephaestus, who had a vested interest in the island.[76] Aphrodite stirred in the women a great desire for the men so that the island would be inhabited by men again and not utterly ruined (Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.850-52). However the transition back to conventional life takes place, it happens swiftly, and the threat of the autonomous self-sufficient female group is extinguished.

(iii) The sanitized version of the female group

Of the Lemnian story, there appear to have been again two contrasting conceptions: one in which the Lemnian women were more militant, and the other in which they were more accommodating. As we have seen, fifth-century literature provides many examples of the impious nature of the Lemnian women (see pp.67-68). In the elaborate description provided by Apollonius of the Lemnian episode, we also find that the women behave ruthlessly toward the men: they enact female transgressions (1.609-10); they allow 'insatiable jealousy' to overcome rationality (1.616); and they don armour and go down to the beach where Jason's ship had arrived like ravening Thyiades/Maenads - *θυιάσιν ὠμοβόροις ἴκελαι* (1.635-36).[77]

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[75]cf. Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.675ff, but see the romantic interest at 1.697, 1.784, 1.844.

[76]The connection between Hepaestus and Lemnos is a strong one. The volcanic nature of the island lay behind the myth that it was the legendary foundry of Hephaestus. The island is said to be where Hephaestus landed when Hera threw him out of Olympus disgusted at his deformity. He was here tended by the indigenous Sinties (Hom. *Il.* 1.590-94). Lemnos became one of Hephaestus's principal cult sites.

[77]The militant attitude of the Lemnian women may feature in Aeschylus's and Sophocles' versions also. For in a scholium to Apollonius's *Argonautica*, it is suggested that in Aeschylus's tragedy, *Hypsipyle*, the women take up arms and keep the men from landing on the island until they take an oath to sleep with them. In the same scholium,

There is a second aspect to their nature, however, for the women clamour with delight in the assembly at the prospect of the Argonauts staying (Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.697). They are pleased by the appearance of Jason (1.784) and dance with joy when Jason says his men will stay (1.844). When the Argonauts attempt to leave the island, the women are said to have run down to the beach, clustering round them, lamenting their departure, and wishing them a speedy return (1.878-85). Hypsipyle herself shed tears over Jason's departure (1.886-87). Some detail in this account is clearly pure romanticization and dramatization on the part of Apollonius. The fact remains, however, that from early sources, which would have been familiar at Athens (Homer, Pindar, Euripides, and possibly Aeschylus's and Sophocles' tragic versions), the Lemnian women entertained the Argonauts and had children by them. This theme returns the women to the fold of safe heterosexual society. It is as if this group of women is not the same group that was capable of mercilessly butchering every last man on the island. For in certain respects, the murderous tendencies of the women have been scored out of the myth, and the threat of another single-sex female group has been eliminated.[78]

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we are told that in Sophocles' version, *Lēmniai,* the Lemnian women joined in battle with the Argonauts (schol. Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.769-73).

[78]In later antiquity, we hear of an annual ritual celebrated on Lemnos in its two principle towns of Hephaestia and Myrine. This 'New Fire' festival involved the separation of the sexes, and thus a dislocation of domestic life as in the myth, and the extinguishing of all fires for nine days. The fires were relit when new fire was brought in a ship from Delos. At this point, athletic games were held and there were joyous reunions of husband and wife, and all normal life activities continued. This ritual has a great deal in common with the myth of the Lemnian women. Both Burkert and, more recently, Bowie have analysed the similarities. See Walter Burkert, 'Jason, Hypsipyle, and New Fire at Lemnos: A Study in Myth and Ritual', *CQ,* 20 (1970), 1-16, and Walter Burkert, *Homo Necans: The Anthropology of Ancient Greek Sacrificial Ritual and Myth,* trans. by Peter Bing (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1983), pp.190-96. Bowie and Richard P. Martin independently go on to draw extremely close and convincing parallels between *Lysistrata* and both the Lemnian myth and ritual. Bowie concludes that the women are meant to be viewed as an alien group which occupies the city without right, such as the group of Amazons or Lemnians, but that this negative evocation is always balanced in the play by a more positive image, as it is these

Perceptively, Gantz notes that the Lemnian women in the Argonaut story function rather like the Lotus Eaters and Circe in the story of Odysseus. These figures all offer the heroes a place of comfort and ease on their islands, which tempts them away from completing the feats that will confirm their status as great heroes, and are thus seen as destructive influences.[79] Indeed, there are many further parallels between the Lemnian episode and the above episodes in the *Odyssey* which further exemplify the theme of the hero who has to be forced to leave the enchanting place, and often, more specifically, enchanting women. For Hercules has to remind the Argonauts in a reproachful speech to leave the island of Lemnos, wondering whether they have forgotten their previous goal to carry out heroic feats, and whether they have forgotten that they have wives and families at home. He reserves some specific criticism for Jason, who, he says, can be left all day to lie in Hypsipyle's arms repopulating the island for her (Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 1.862-74). Similarly, in the *Odyssey*, Odysseus is reproached by one of his shipmates after having spent a year on Circe's island, reminding him that it is time to think of Ithaca again (*Od.* 10.472-74). Just before the Argonauts are about to leave in Apollonius's version, Hypsipyle asks Jason to remember her when he is far away and back in his home, thus reminding him of the claim she has on him (1.896-97). It is in these terms that Nausicaa addresses Odysseus, when he is about to leave the land of the Phaeacians on his way to Ithaca. She reminds him of his debt to her for being the first to help him when he arrived on the island (*Od.* 8.461-62).

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outsider women who, in reality, restore peace to Athens. See Bowie (n.38), Chapter 8, pp.195 and 198, and Richard P. Martin, 'Fire on the Mountain: *Lysistrata* and the Lemnian Women', *Cl Ant*, 6 (1987), 77-105. Aristophanes is then perhaps unique in his construction of the female group as something positive. But the fact that he has a vast pool of common constructions and stereotypes of the female group upon which to draw is significant. He uses the common negative discourse of the transgressive female group, but arguably often adds his own more positive interpretation of their actions, thus questioning that negative stereotype. For an elaboration of this theme, see Chapter 3 here.

[79]Gantz (n.7), p.346.

As a *group* of distracting women, however, the Lemnians could be said to have the closest affiliations with other destructive female groups, such as the Sirens and the Harpies, which are all female figures who hold the hero back from the completion of his heroic destiny. In this respect, the paradigm of the transgressive group is easily extended to include those semi-divine/subhuman female groups which are also the destroyers of men.

(d) Monstrous female groups

The theme of the subhuman/semi-divine female group is widespread and influential. Part of its force lies in the ability of these images to tap into societal fears of women grouped and exploit them in exaggerated discourse which fosters the horrific images. In each different group of monstrous female figures, we can find significant themes that hark back to those described for the mortal groups of Amazons, Danaids and Lemnians.

Sometimes, as in the case of the Sirens, the female groups work through allurement. The Sirens dwelt on a rock near Scylla and Charybdis and seduced passing sailors with their divine song and their omniscient knowledge, which they had inherited from their mother, one of the muses (Melpomene, Terpsichore or Calliope).[80] The men on the ships were so enchanted by the Sirens' song that the ships ran-aground and, it is presumed, provided human victims to be eaten clean to the bone by the Sirens (Hom. *Od.* 12.45-46).

In the common stories of the Sirens, although fearsome and a match for men, like the Amazons, the bird-women are ultimately defeated by superheroes, and in some versions, they forfeit their lives when beaten by a mortal. Their threat is thus extinguished and they function like the female groups in the mortal examples. For instance, both Odysseus and Jason face the Sirens, and both these superheroes succeed in defeating them. In the case of Odysseus, in accordance with Circe's instructions, his

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[80]But note how the article by J. R. T. Pollard draws clear distinctions between Sirens and Muses: J. R. T. Pollard, 'Muses and Sirens', *CR*, 2.2 (1952), 60-63.

crew have wax inserted into their ears to avoid the Sirens' sweet singing and Odysseus is tied to the mast (Hom. *Od.* 12.37-54, 181-200; Apollod. *Epit.* 7.18ff). Jason's men escape the Sirens because Orpheus, one of the crew, plays his lyre so sweetly that it distracts the men from the Sirens' allure (Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.891-919 (especially 4.905-11)).[81] If a ship successfully passes the monstrous birds, one source claims, the Sirens have reached their fated day of death (Hyg. *Fab.* 125.13, 141.2). Other sources add that the Sirens threw themselves into the sea in vexation that Odysseus had escaped them. Both scenarios effectively end the domination and autonomy of the female group.[82]

Among the many stories explaining how the Sirens came to be half-woman and half-bird, there is a notable suggestion that Aphrodite angrily turned them from maidens into birds because they chose to remain virgins.[83] This suggestion only appears in post-Classical works, but it plainly constructs the group as an anti-male group in the mould of the Amazons, Danaids and Lemnians.[84]

Sometimes the women attempt to destroy men simply through their grotesque behaviour in their plural form. For instance, the Harpies, who, were originally closely associated with the storm-winds, were personified in later literature as malicious women with wings and claws (*θύελλαι* Hom. *Od.* 20.66). The numbers of the Harpies fluctuated in different versions: they are children of Thaumas and Electra (one of the Oceanides) in some sources, and called Aello and Ocypete (Hes. *Theog.* 265-69, Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.2.6), but in other versions, there is only one harpy, Podarge, mother

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[81]See also Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.25.

[82]Schol. Hom. *Od.* 12.39; Eust. *Od.* 12, vers. 167, n.1709.

[83]Schol. Hom. *Od.* 12.39, Eust. *Od.* 12, vers. 47, n.1709, cf. other reasons in Hyg. *Fab.* 141.

[84]For a description of the Sirens in Ancient art, see Gantz (n.7) pp.708-09, and Odette Touchefeu-Meynier, 'Ulysse et les Sirènes', *LIMC* 6.1, under 'Odysseus' (pp.962-64).

of Achilles' swift-horses, Xanthus and Balios by Zephyrus.[85] In yet other versions there are three of them, Aellopoda, Calaeno and Ocypete (Hyg. *Fab.* 14.18). In Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, they are used as a comparison along with the Gorgons, to describe the loathsome Erinyes, who are found by the priestess in the temple at Delphi next to the sleeping Orestes. She had seen pictures of the Harpies once stealing Phineus's food, and notices a strong resemblance (*Eum.* 48-51).

There are two notable stories attached to the Harpies: the first describes them carrying off the daughters of Pandareus to be servants to the Erinyes (*Od.* 20.66-78); the other features in the Argonaut saga, in which they plague the blind seer Phineus and spoil all his food at the behest of Zeus (Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.178-300, Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.9.21).[86]

The fate of the Harpies in the versions of Apollodorus and Apollonius is different but, in both cases, the sons of Boreas, Zetes and Calais, bring the pesky birds under control (cf. also Hesiod fr.156 M-W). Again here, a group of female figures is eradicated by a band of male figures. In this case, it is the divine members of Jason's heroic crew who control the women. In Apollodorus's version, the Harpies are chased by the winged men and die when they fall out of the sky in exhaustion (*Bibl.* 1.9.21). In Apollonius's version, when the Harpies are just about to be caught, Iris (allegedly a sister of the Harpies, cf. Hes. *Theog.* 266-67) appeases the captors and promises that the Harpies will not disturb Phineus again (*Argon.* 2.286-300).[87]

Again, with the Stymphalides, we find elements of the man-rejecting female

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[85]Hom. *Il.* 16. 149-51, but cf. *Od.* 20.77, where the plural, ἄρπυιαι, is used.

[86]An early version connects the Harpies with Phineus. For in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, Ephorus has the Harpies take Phineus to the land of the *Glaktophagoi*, a people of Thrace (fr.151 M-W). Gantz (n.7) p.353 suggests that this story relates to an episode where the Harpies snatch up Phineus bodily and carry him around the world, while the Boreadai follow them in pursuit. Hermes is said to have intervened and the Harpies are spared punishment (fr.156 M-W).

[87]For the Harpies in art, see Lily Kahil's entry 'Harpyiai' in *LIMC* 4.1, pp.445-50; Cecil Smith, 'Harpies in Greek Art', *JHS*, 13 (1892-93), 103-14; and Gantz (n.7), pp.349-55.

group, ultimately defeated by the hero, featuring in the depiction of a group of monstrous 'man-eating' creatures (Paus. 8.22.4). The Stymphalides are birds in Hercules' sixth labour who despoil the land, and infest Lake Stymphalus in northeastern Arcadia. Hercules acquires a bronze rattle to frighten them off, and in one version he also shoots at them.[88] In other versions, however, they are the ungracious daughters of the legendary king Stymphalus. The girls did not receive Hercules hospitably (schol. Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.1052-57a). And according to Pausanias, there are statues of the Stymphalides in white marble depicting them as women with birds' feet behind the sanctuary of Artemis on the lake of Stymphalus (Paus. 8.22.7). Again, we do not have earlier versions for this story.

Nevertheless, from these examples a clear pattern emerges in which groups of female figures transgress the boundaries delimited for women by male discourse, and are subsequently subdued by male heroes. And very many of these patterns are attested for the Classical period. The threat of the female group is always ultimately negated, only to reemerge in another version. The list of the monstrous female groups which were notorious in Classical Athens, and beyond, is astoundingly long, and many more stories could have been cited here.[89] It is clear that the representation of these

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[88]Paus. 8.22.4, Pausanias cites here Peisander's version = Bernabé, *PEG* fr.4, p.168. cf. Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.1052-57, Diod. Sic. 4.13.2, Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.5.6.

[89]The other categories of female figures common in the myth of the fifth century which could be included in the paradigm of the monstrous death-bringing female group are the Gorgons (who were interestingly pseudo-historicized as a tribe of warrior women, living near the Amazons in Libya, defeated by both Perseus and Hercules (Diod. Sic. 3.55.3)); the Graiai (three sisters of the Gorgons, who shared one eye and one tooth, cheated by Perseus); the Erinyes (relentless goddesses who pursued wrong-doers); the Moirai (the formidable Fates described as old and lame, yet inescapable for all mortals); and the Lamiae (who appear in several sources as vampiric women, who seduce men to devour their blood/energy/resources, and are akin to Empousae (Philostr. *VA* 4.25)). For further details on these compare Robert E. Bell, *Women of Classical Mythology: A Bibliographical Dictionary* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Even female groups not commonly thought of as particularly destructive are sometimes characterized as dangerous. For instance, nymphs pursue and abduct the men they desire. But if the nymphs who follow Artemis and observe laws of chastity receive unwelcome attention from lascivious mortals, the men are severely punished

women in some stories affected their representation in others, as the wicked activities of one group were recorded in later versions as the actions of another group. In the recounting of myths, such transposition and conflation must have been inevitable. Yet it is also clear that the theme of the destructive female semi-monstrous group became particularly notorious, stamping its character with consistent regularity on a significantly large number of stories about the female group. Of all the possible outgroups which could have been chosen in Classical Athens and elsewhere in Greece, it was the outgroup of women that generated the greatest amount of negative stereotyping. This group functioned as the necessary prop for the maintenance of high self-esteem in the group of male citizens, who both created these groups, and perpetuated them.

Conclusion

Nina Auerbach wrote a short book called *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction* about the recurring motif of the group of women in nineteenth-century literature. She classifies it as 'a rebuke to the conventional ideal of the solitary woman living for and through men' (p.5). According to her, the image of the female group has haunted our

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(Bell, pp.326-27). The Hesperides have some dark elements in their pedigree also. For they were said to be the daughters of Nyx who guarded the golden apples with their pet serpent Ladon coiled round the tree, 'in the dark hollows at the furthest ends of the earth' (Hes. *Theog.* 333-35). The Hesperides were also conflated with the Harpies in some versions: Acousilaos makes the Harpies the guardians of the apples, and Epimenides' *Theogony* identified the Harpies with the Hesperides (fr.6 *FGrH* 3B, p.391). The divine Muses, whose number varied, but became most commonly thought of as nine in the Classical imagination, mercilessly punished anyone who claimed to sing more sweetly than them. For example, they blinded Thamyris and robbed him of his singing voice, and changed the daughters of Pierus into birds after defeating them in a singing contest (Bell, pp.312-14). Admittedly, as these groups were semi-divine, it was common for them to wreak the customary revenge on mortals who demonstrated *hubris*. It is interesting, however, that it is so commonly the female *group* which enacts the revenge and is portrayed in such distinctly negative ways. Moreover, it is startling to realize that there are virtually no completely positively depicted female groups: arguably, only the Charites and the Horae (see Bell, pp.117, 248 for further details of these two groups).

literary imagination from the beginning, citing the Graiai and Amazons as her source.[90] Yet there are many further examples. Beyond the Graiai and Amazons there is a great network of such transgressive female communities, both monsters and mortals; but all monstrous. Dowden describes the myths of the Minyades, Proitides, Danaids, Thespiades and Stymphalides shunning husbands and escaping into the wild pursued by men as aetiological stories for cultic dances common in Greek culture at the time of marriage. In these encounters, choruses of (fifty) women were pursued by choruses of (fifty) men in ritual dance formation.[91] Dowden mentions here, for instance, the significance of the fifty Nereides dancing at the marriage of Peleus and Thetis (pp.157-58). Common to the stories discussed above is the theme of the female group that flees, breaks the boundaries of its sex, goes insane in the open, destroys property as

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[90]Nina Auerbach, *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp.3-5.

[91]Ken Dowden, *Death and the Maiden: Girls' Initiation Rites in Greek Mythology* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp.85-87, 157-58, 160, 179-81, 200-01. There are several other important works which are concerned with the function of the myths of the adolescent female. See for instance, the myths of the Proitides, Minyades and Theban Maenads linked by the common theme of the communal subjugation of women by the *polis* into their conventional roles as wives and mothers. This subjugation, according to Seaford, is defined and confirmed through its imagined subversion in Maenadic cult. See Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp.257-58, 301-311. See also the classic work of Calame who considers the frequency of certain key numbers of women forming female choruses in myth and ritual. He remarks on the frequency of the number fifty, mentioning fifty Nereides and fifty Danaids, and also, seven as a common figure denoting Pleiades, Hyades, or Muses, who are also often numbered nine etc. Calame also sees the Minyades, Proitides and Maenads of Thebes as suggesting rites of passage from adolescence to adulthood, when girls are made ready for marriage. He charts many other myths of female groups relating them in each case to rituals for women at various stages of transition between adolescence and marriage. See Claude Calame, *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece: Their Morphology, Religious Role, and Social Function,* trans. by Derek Collins and Jane Orion (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997); originally published as *Les Choeurs de jeunes filles en Grèce archaïque*, 2 vols (Rome: Ateneo and Bizzarri, 1977). From the English version, see pp. 21-25 for the issue of numbers in the female choral group, and pp.134-38, 242 for the Maenadic groups.

well as sometimes human life, but is pursued by a band of men and ultimately brought under control. Although the theory of the adolescent transitional ritual related to these myths of group activity is an attractive one, there must be more symbolism in the stories than simply aetiology for a ritual.[92] For these groups were indeed also 'ideas in fiction', and were taken up in fiction again and again, with each myth influencing the other, until they all seemed to adhere to the same pattern, and all delineated the female group negatively.

In this chapter, I have established that three clear themes occur in the Amazon, Danaid and Lemnian myths, and can be attested in or before the Classical period. First, there is always a rebel in the group, who does not conform to the group norms. Second, the women cannot exist as a single-sex group for long before they are destroyed, or reabsorbed into patriarchal society. Third, the stories offer a second sanitized version, which depicts the women as less transgressive. The similar themes in these stories and the perpetual interest in negatively stereotyping the female groups tell us much about the stratification of the sexes in Classical Athens, and probably further afield, in the rest of Classical Greece.

The fact that the later sources, for the most part, constructed the groups in similar ways to earlier depictions, could rely on two things. On the one hand, it may have resulted from the faithfulness of their recording of fifth-century or earlier sources, to which they had access but we do not. On the other hand, it may have been due to the continuation in their own societies of a certain kind of perspective of the female group, which is characterized in the ground-breaking, if polemical, study of Classical Athens by Keuls, as the outlook of 'phallocracy'.[93] Both propositions are probably true. A more diachronic investigation of the theme of the transgressive groups would be

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[92]See Chapter 2 for a study of erratic female group behaviour related to the commonly held preconceptions of woman as biologically predisposed to hysterical actions. See also Chapter 4 for an examination of the male-generated stories concerning the violent direction taken by many women-only festivals, classically exemplified by Maenadic ritual and the Thesmophoriae.

[93]Keuls (n.3), pp.1-2.

required to investigate the developments in perception of women as a group beyond the Classical period.

There is enough evidence, however, from Classical times to establish that the mere concept of any women grouped evoked depictions of threatening women, which are accorded exaggerated and stereotyped qualities. Indeed, the sheer prevalence and interconnectedness of the myths of the transgressive female group allow us to glimpse the way the mythmakers worked in their negative categorization of female groups. If we consider the implications of the social psychology of groups and the way discourse repeatedly constructed the negative female paradigm, we can understand the prevalence and similarity of these myths. For the myths, in part, existed to categorize the female group (outgroup) as alien to, yet controlled by, the male group (ingroup) which dominated the public act of mythmaking in fifth-century Greece.

Chapter 2

The Tragic Perspective of the Chorus in Fifth-Century Drama

Introduction

This chapter focuses more centrally than the last on fifth-century Athenian tragedy and the depiction of the female group in the form of the chorus. I move away from the social psychology of groups here, to consider some basic conceptions of the feminine and the female group in Classical thought. Certain negative qualities which were believed by ancient Greek society to accrue, both by nature and by social convention, to the female, and especially the female group, are described here. These qualities combine to make the female group the perfect site for the tragic chorus. The central quality described is a woman's unrestrained emotionality which, in the fifth century, was thought to be rooted in her biology. The female propensity to show emotion in part explains her key role in funerary lamentation, which, in turn, points to the female group as the perfect exponent of tragic choral utterances.

As we saw in the last chapter, Athenian tragedians of the fifth century inherited a corpus of traditional myths from which they selected and adapted stories for their plays. Because these myths would have been well known to the viewing public, the tragedians were limited to a certain extent in character-delineation and plot. The character of the chorus was the one area, however, in which they did not have a previous model to follow. In each play, a fictive chorus could be chosen that would best complement the characters inherited from tradition. The playwright could determine such characteristics of the chorus as age, sex, ethnic origin, and allegiance to the main protagonist.

With regard to the corpus of extant Athenian tragedy, there is no doubt that the majority of choruses are groups of female characters. In the extant work of Aeschylus, there are five female choruses out of a possible seven; in Sophocles, two

out of seven; and, in Euripides, fourteen out of seventeen.[1] The apparent preference for a female chorus in Aeschylus and Euripides is an interesting coincidence, but, because we have only a fraction of their whole output and lack adequate information about many of their lost plays, we cannot say that it constituted a definitive characteristic of their work. On the other hand, there were many dominant fifth-century social assumptions about the female, which suggest why a chorus of female characters might have appeared a preferable option for the Athenian tragedians.

The central perception of the female in the fifth century which fosters a whole range of allied characteristics is her excessive (and potentially dangerous) level of emotionality. It was generally expected that women would articulate their suffering openly and respond noisily to tragic events, while men were expected to remain stoically silent. Women's group response to tragic events had its traditional locus in female funerary lamentation. As the acts of tragedy were kept *off* the fifth-century stage, it was the elaborate response to, and lamentation of, those acts *on stage* which sustained the tension of the audience and provided the primary interest. Tragedy can be said to constitute *logos*, or rather, in the context of a specifically feminine response, *pathos*, as a defence against chaos.[2] The female chorus was the perfect locus for an

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[1]The term 'female chorus' which I frequently use refers only to the fictive identity of the chorus. It is clear that no tragic female chorus in the fifth century would have been played by women. Boys or adult tenors would have been used to reproduce women's voices. See Cynthia P. Gardiner, *The Sophoclean Chorus: A Study of Character and Function* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press 1987), p.119.

[2]These terms are used by Justina Gregory who describes the defence of the Trojan women in Euripides' play of that name as one of *logos* against the chaos of the destruction of Troy, in *Euripides and the Instruction of the Athenians* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), pp.158-60. The principle of *logos* which bears the meaning of logic and rationality, as well as speech, is somewhat inappropriate to describe an emotional response to tragedy, especially as it has been associated so closely with the male principle. Aristotle calls woman's soul *alogos* (irrational), as opposed to a man's which is *logos* (*Pol.* 1260a6-7). A more appropriate pair of opposites describing male and female discourse is suggested by Peter Burian, who, when, describing the action of Euripides' *Supplices,* talks of two contrasting *cosmoi*: the inarticulate mourning of women (*pathos*) and male political rhetoric (*logos*). See Peter Burian, '*Logos* and *Pathos*: The Politics of the *Suppliant Women*', in *Directions in Euripidean*

emotional response to the enfolding tragedy, as it could demonstrate a range of emotions not commonly expressed by men. And thus it could help the male audience share vicariously in the uniquely tragic perspective of the feminine.[3]

The chapter is divided into four parts. Part 1 examines the significance given in previous scholarship to the apparent prevalence of the female chorus in tragedy. As most previous lines of argumentation have proved relatively inconclusive, Part 2 introduces some new insights which help to clarify the issue. I describe the common assumptions about the female and female group, which were prevalent in fifth-century Athens, and would have rendered the female group a more appropriate vehicle for the

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Criticism: A Collection of Essays, ed. by Peter Burian (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1985), pp.129-55 (p.130). Yet a third similar pair of contrastive terms for male and female discourse is found in Froma I. Zeitlin's work on Aeschylus's *Supplices*, where she describes the Danaids employing *muthos* against the male democratic world of *logos* in Argos, in 'The Politics of Eros in the Danaid Trilogy of Aeschylus', in *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature*, by Froma I. Zeitlin (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp.123-71 (p.126). She also contrasts the insights of male and female in another play using the term *muthos* for the female. She suggests how the chorus in Aeschylus's *Seven Against Thebes* knows the *muthos* of the Theban family and can link past, present and future in a visionary way, whereas the blinkered king Eteocles is focused only on the immediate (*kairos*). See Froma I. Zeitlin, 'Patterns of Gender in Aeschylean Drama: *Seven Against Thebes* and the Danaid Trilogy', in *Cabinet of the Muses: Essays on Classical and Comparative Literature in Honor of Thomas G. Rosenmeyer*, ed. by Mark Griffith and Donald J. Mastronarde (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1990), pp.103-15 (pp.110-11).

[3]The debate still goes on as to whether women attended the Greek theatre in the Classical period. Goldhill seems most convincing in saying that they were probably not present. Certainly for the purposes of the argument here, it is enough to establish that the *conceptual* audience of the tragedies was male. See Simon Goldhill, 'Representing Democracy: Women at the Great Dionysia', in *Ritual, Finance, Politics: Athenian Democratic Accounts Presented to David Lewis*, ed. by Robin Osborne and Simon Hornblower (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp.347-69, and Simon Goldhill, 'The Audience of Athenian Tragedy', in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Tragedy*, ed. by P. E. Easterling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp.54-68 (pp.62-66). On the other side of the debate, see Jeffrey Henderson, 'Women and the Athenian Dramatic Festivals', *TAPhA*, 121 (1991), 133-47.

tragic chorus. The most important quality discussed here is the female's perceived greater emotional nature, as recorded in the biology, philosophy and dramatic literature of the period.

In Part 3, several tragedies are discussed in detail which are shown to exploit the various effects of a woman's greater emotionality. First, emotionality was seen to lead into hysterical behaviour which, if conducted in the open, but not sanctioned in the context of ritual behaviour, created a potential hazard to the order of the state. The hysteria of the female group, centered on the chorus, is a common theme in tragedy, in such plays as Aeschylus's *Seven Against Thebes,* and *Supplices,* and transferable to the choruses in Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Bacchae* (Part 3a). Second, linked to women's perceived greater emotionality was her reputation to comment openly and incessantly on events, including tragic ones, as is seen in the traditional role of women as story-tellers, preservers of the collective social memory of the kin group, and traditional funerary lamenters. This activity constituted an important part of the tragic action, as the tragic events off stage were only made vivid by the commentary and analysis of them by those on stage, primarily the chorus. And so we often find female choruses carrying out these functions of commentary, e.g. Aeschylus's *Supplices* and Euripides' *Phoenissae* and *Trojan Women* (Part 3b). Third, women's intense emotionality underpinned the threat inherent in the lamenting female group to inspire others with either tears of sympathy, or more sinisterly, thoughts of revenge. The danger in the lamentation of the female group with its potential to incite revenge is a common theme in Greek tragedy, e.g. Aeschylus's *Choephoroe*, and Euripides' *Supplices* (Part 3c).

Part 4 investigates the elderly male choruses in tragedy. The elderly attracted some of the same cultural assumptions as the female, especially in terms of their emotionality, readiness to lament, and passivity. These assumptions are used here to suggest why an elderly male group may have had similar qualities to the female group to offer in the role of tragic chorus .

While it is clear that no one characteristic can explain the choice of a particular chorus in any one drama, an emotional chorus, which is more likely to be a female chorus, would have been more able to evoke the pity and fear of the audience. In

Aristotelian terms, it was precisely pity and fear, emotions fostered better by the female, that eventually converted into the pleasure appropriate to tragedy. The premise of this chapter does not depend on a preference for a female chorus in the extant works of tragedy, since the focus here is rather on the qualities of the female which would make a female chorus preferable. As a preliminary investigation, it would be interesting, however, to quantify the proportion of female choruses in the extant works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, and to consider whether, on the evidence from fragments and citations of lost plays, we can say that the trends in the extant works are at all representative of the larger picture.

The frequency of the female chorus

It is impossible to assess the frequency of the female chorus in Attic tragedy without considering each playwright's work separately. For whilst Aeschylus and Euripides have considerably more female choruses than male ones, Sophocles has only a couple in his extant work. This distribution could suggest that the different playwrights had different attitudes towards the role of the chorus; different dramatic concerns; different views about the female; or that the small sample of texts which are extant have arbitrarily produced these gender ratios. I suspect that all of the above factors have a role to play in the analysis of the chorus. By taking the extant work of the poets in turn, however, it is possible to make some interesting comparisons between the identity of the chorus and the identity of the main protagonists in each play.

Castellani has already attempted to establish for each playwright patterns in the sex of the chorus, which is shown either to imitate or contrast with the sex of the leading protagonist.[4] In the extant work of Aeschylus, five out of the seven plays have a female chorus, and all seven have choruses which contrast in sex with the main protagonist of each play. He concludes for Aeschylus a possible interest in the battle of the sexes theme, which often surfaces between chorus and protagonist (p.2).

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[4]Victor Castellani, 'The Value of a Kindly Chorus: Female Choruses in Attic Tragedy', *Themes in Drama*, 11 (1989), 1-18. Page numbers in the text that follow refer to this article.

When he analyses the same data for Sophocles, we find that only two of the seven extant plays have a female chorus, and six out of the seven are of the same sex as the main protagonist. According to Castellani, this result shows a marked difference from Aeschylus, and an interest in presenting a predominantly male world on the tragic stage, where men comment and speculate on men (p.3).

Of the seventeen surviving plays of Euripides (excluding *Rhesus* and *Cyclops*), fourteen have a female chorus. Although there is also a strong preference for the same sex chorus as protagonist, the statistics are somewhat blurred because there often appear to be dual protagonists; one of each sex, e.g. Hippolytus and Phaedra in *Hippolytus*, Jason and Medea in *Medea,* Electra and Orestes in *Electra* (p.3).

Whilst it is an interesting exercise to notice such patterns concerning the chorus in the extant plays, it is still questionable whether they are at all representative of the majority of choruses in the dramatists' total works. Castellani, however, tentatively confirms for the lost plays, with evidence gained from fragments and testimonia, the patterns found in the small corpus of extant plays. He stresses that his work is partly reliant on subjective assessments, so does not claim authority, but nevertheless, his findings are useful in giving us some broad patterns in the fragmentary plays.

Of the twenty-six lost plays of Aeschylus for which we have sufficient or suggestive information about the likely chorus and protagonist, fifteen appear to have had a chorus of female characters, and twenty had a chorus contrasting in sex with the protagonist. He concludes, therefore, that Aeschylus showed again a slight preference for the female chorus, and cases of opposite-sex chorus and protagonist seem to have been a standard feature of his work.[5] Of the twenty-six lost plays of Sophocles for

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[5]See Castellani (n.4), p.2. In the footnote to the section on Aeschylus in Castellani's work (p.15, n.4), he gives details of the plays he has included in his analysis. Female choruses give the titles of thirteen Aeschylean plays: *Aitnaiai, Argeiai* (although given as *Argeioi* in *TrGF* 3, frs 16-19, pp.133-35), *Bakkhai, Bassarai, Danaides, Heliades, Threissai, Kressai, Nereides, Xantriai, Perrhaibides, Salaminiai,* and most probably, *Toxotides*. Male choruses entitle eight plays: *Aigyptioi, Diktyoulkoi, Eleusinioi, Edonoi, Kares, Myrmidones, Mysoi* and *Phryges.* There is ancient testimony

which we have some information, sixteen had a male chorus, and all of them had either a male protagonist or at least a central male role. Of the remaining ten plays which had a female chorus, eight of them had a major female role. So in Sophocles' lost plays, he concludes, we have a similar pattern as in the extant works: a preference for male choruses and same-sex protagonists.[6] Although Euripides' other known tragedies have a smaller proportion of female choruses, there is still a preference for them, with nineteen (*sic*) known female choruses in comparison with ten/eleven male choruses.[7]

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that *Hoplon Krisis* had a chorus of Nereid nymphs; *Kabeiroi*, a chorus of Argonauts, and *Philoktetes*, one of Lemnian women. A male participle from a fragment of *Prometheus Lyomenos* makes clear the gender of the chorus, but not its identity. It has been conjectured that *Thalamopoioi* was a member of the trilogy including *Supplices*, and has been assigned as chorus the group of Egyptian cousins and would-be husbands of the Danaids.

[6]ibid. In Castellani's footnote to this section (p.15, n.5), he gives six titles which indicate a female chorus: *Aikhmalotides*, *Mykenaiai* (or, according to *TrGF*, called *Atreus* - *TrGF* 4, frs 140-41, pp.162-63), *Kolkhides*, *Lakainai*, *Lemniai* and *Phthiotides*. Nine indicate a male chorus: *Aithiopes*, *Dolopes*, *Kamikoi*, *Larissaioi*, *Mysoi*, *Poimenes*, *Skythai*, *Skyrioi* and *Phaiakes*. Three others are probably to be included here also: *Antenoridai*, *Epigonoi* and *Syndeipnoi*. In *Kreousa* and *Phaidra* choruses address themselves in the feminine gender, and the title character in *Nausikaa* had a chorus of washing women - Pluntriai, who gave their name as an alternative title of the play. According to ancient testimony, *Hipponous* had a female chorus, and the masculine gender in presumed *Tereus* choral fragments gives away a clue to the chorus there. An ancient scholiast commented that *Meleagros* had a chorus of priests, and there is a strong likelihood that *Aias Lokros* and *Helenes Apaitesis* had respectively Greek and Trojan men as choruses.

[7]ibid. In Castellani's footnote to this section (p.16, n.8), he gives as more or less sure conjectures for lost plays with a female chorus: *Aiolos*, *Alexandros*, *Alkmeon 'A'*, *Alkmeon 'B'*, *Andromeda*, *Auge*, *Danaë*, *Diktys*, *Erekhtheus*, *Ino*, *Hippolytos Kalyptomenos*, *Hypsipyle*, *Melanippe Desmotis*, *Meleagros*, *Peleus*, *Phaethon*, *Phrixos* and *Polyidos*. Male choruses feature in *Alope*, *Antiope*, *Bellerophontes*, *Khrysippos*, *Kresphontes*, *Kretes*, *Oineus*, *Peliades*, *Philoktetes* and *Telephus*. There are very few title-choruses here; the choruses are conjectured primarily through fragments and plausible reconstructions. Compare, however, some slightly different conclusions drawn about some of these plays in a similar investigation of the sex of the chorus in Euripides' lost plays by Martin Hose, *Studium zum Chor bei Euripides*, 2 vols (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1990-91), vol I, pp.22-27.

Although Castellani's findings are fascinating, since the evidence for his assertions is often ambiguous, resting merely on the title of the play or a fragment, and relying too heavily on conjectures based on the content of the well-known myths themselves, it would be wise to avoid fragmental evidence. Moreover Castellani can only draw on the plays about which we have a little information, i.e. twenty to thirty plays for each playwright. The number of plays he considers, therefore, is still only a relatively small percentage of what appears to be the total number of works for each playwright. The evidence from manuscripts shows that Aeschylus could have written up to seventy plays, Euripides, around eighty, and Sophocles, some one hundred and twenty. Whether the apparent preference for a female chorus in Aeschylus's and Euripides' extant works reflects a preference throughout their oeuvres remains unknown to us from surveys such as this. This does not matter for this study, however, since we do not need to presuppose a frequency of the female chorus. Here, the debate is reversed, for it outlines what qualities in the female would have predisposed a dramatist to use her in the choral role.

Part 1

Previous scholarship on the tragic chorus

Before stating the case for an especially tragic perspective located in the female chorus, it is important to situate this particular debate in the context of centuries of discussion and disagreement on the function of the tragic chorus. Surprisingly, Aristotle had nothing to say on the chorus in his definition of tragedy (*Poet.* 1449b21ff). But his comment that tragedy originated from 'those who led the dithyramb', started the centuries-old academic debate about the chorus which followed (*Poet.* 1449a11). For ever since, the interest in the chorus as the original element of Attic tragedy has obscured investigations into the function of the chorus *per se* on the fifth-century stage.[8] In his lectures of 1809-1811, August Wilhelm Schlegel suggested

[8]For an outline of the notorious confusion over the origins of tragedy, see R. P. Winnington-Ingram, 'The Origins of Tragedy', in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, I: *Greek Literature*, ed. by P. E. Easterling and B. M. W. Knox (Cambridge:

that the chorus had the role of 'idealischer Zuschauer', and, well into the twentieth century, this concept remained the dominant line in German scholarship.[9] The other equally traditional understanding of the chorus as the 'voice of the poet' has also enjoyed a long history stretching back to a scholiast's comment at Euripides' *Medea* 823. It still finds supporters in more recent times.[10]

More recent research on the tragic chorus, however, is dominated by a desire to move away from both these positions, to the recognition that the chorus in tragedy is not a monolithic unit which can be given one definitional tag. According to this view, the choruses are all different and their function in any particular tragedy cannot be divorced from the play's context or the chorus's own character. If all choruses had exactly the same dramatic function, it would be hard to understand why there was such a variety of chorus types: old and young, free and slave, male and female.[11] Equally, by focusing on the identity of the chorus in terms of its character, rather than adopting a formalist approach, where the chorus is merely a producer of lyric odes, recent

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Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.258-63; and Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge, *The Dramatic Festivals of Athens*, 2nd edn, rev. by John Gould and D. M. Lewis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), p.57ff.

[9]A. W. Schlegel's lectures in Vienna in 1808, in which he gave the chorus the status of ideal viewer leading the audience's reactions, were subsequently published as *Über Dramatische Kunst und Literatur: Vorlesungen von August Wilhelm Schlegel*, 3 vols (Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer, 1809-11). This line was adopted by Walther Kranz in his comprehensive study of the lyric parts of tragedy, *Stasimon: Untersuchungen zu Form und Gehalt der Griechischen Tragödie* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1933).

[10]See for instance Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, 'Elusory Voices: Thoughts about the Sophoclean Chorus', in *Nomodeiktes: Greek Studies in Honor of Martin Ostwald*, ed. by Ralph M. Rosen and Joseph Farrell (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), pp.557-71.

[11]On this theme, see especially P. E. Easterling 'Women in Tragic Space', *BICS*, 34 (1987), 15-26 (p.26); Marsh McCall, 'The Chorus of Aeschylus' *Choephori*', in Griffith and Mastronarde (n.2), pp.17-30 (p.26); and Simon Goldhill, 'Collectivity and Otherness - The Authority of the Tragic Chorus: Response to Gould', in *Tragedy and the Tragic: Greek Theatre and Beyond*, ed. by M. S. Silk (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp.244-56 (pp.247-48).

critics have attempted to shed light on the broader role of the chorus in any given drama.[12]

Much scholarship has been inspired by the joint insights of Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, who first viewed the chorus in the context of democratic ideology as a civic body in contrast with the plays' individualized heroes. According to their analysis, tragedy juxtaposes in the figures of the chorus and the main protagonist: the community and the individual; the common citizens' wisdom and the

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[12]See Gardiner (n.1), pp.4-5; Peter Wilson, 'Leading the Tragic *Khoros*: Tragic Prestige in the Democratic City', in *Greek Tragedy and the Historian,* ed. by Christopher Pelling (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp.81-108 (p.84, no.7)); and Peter James Wilson, 'The Representation and Rhetoric of the Collective: Athenian Tragic *Choroi* in their Social Context' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1992), p.10. The fact that the poetry of the choral lyrics is not surveyed in detail in this chapter does not suggest that it is unimportant. Metrical considerations add considerably to an appreciation of the character of the chorus, and will be mentioned when they appear useful. See T. B. L. Webster's *The Greek Chorus* (London: Methuen 1970), for some important metrical points concerning the choruses studied here (pp.110-80). See also the work of Kaimio for a close linguistic study of the chorus in Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes. Her findings are too extensive to illustrate here, but she has some interesting observations on the use of the singular and plural in the way the chorus is referred to and the way it refers to itself. Kaimio draws some general conclusions about the differences between the three tragedians. For instance, Aeschylus is shown to use more first-person plurals and collective nouns for the chorus, suggesting that choruses in Aeschylus are conceived of as closed collectives or homogeneous groups. This result proves logical when we consider that choruses in Aeschylus are often personally affected by the fates of the protagonists themselves (pp.240-41). In Sophocles, by contrast, with the first person singular being dominant, there is no emphasis on the choruses' collective nature, other than that they are in an homogeneous group and represent a certain way of thinking. In comparison with Aeschylus, they often represent groups of relatively unaffected individuals, against which the personal misfortunes of the main protagonists stand out (pp.243-44). Kaimio found the least emphasis on the homogeneity of the group in Euripides. First-person singulars are common; there are few collective nouns; and the chorus reflects more truly the plurality of a community group (pp.244-45). Apart from these general differences, Kaimio shows how the use of either singular or plural at specific points in the plays 'contributes to the nuance of thought expressed in the context' (p.20). We return later to some of Kaimio's insights on specific plays. See Maarit Kaimio, *The Chorus of Greek Drama within the Light of the Person and Number Used* (Helsinki: Societas Scientiarum Fennica, 1970).

hero's excesses; the democratic ideal of the civic community and the aristocratic substance of heroic myth.[13] Because of its identity as a group, the chorus presents an interpretation of events which is radically opposed to the interpretation of the single heroic protagonist.

Recent critics have acknowledged a debt to Vernant and Vidal-Naquet for illustrating that the group response to the enfolding tragedy is essentially different from the response of the individual, but they disagree that the group response is representative in any way of the civic community.[14] The chorus is rarely a representative of the collective citizen body, and much more often a marginal group in both the play's fiction and Athenian fifth-century thought, e.g. foreigners, slaves, women and old men.[15] These groups cannot therefore represent the authority of the democratic *polis* against the values of the heroic protagonist.[16]

Of the small number of critics who have noticed the preference for a female chorus in the extant works, very few have found reasonable explanations for this. Some rely on the idea that it is more credible to have a passive female chorus in the

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[13]See Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *Tragedy and Myth in Ancient Greece,* trans. by Janet Lloyd (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1981), p.10; first published as *Mythe et tragédie en Grèce ancienne* (Paris: Maspero, 1972).

[14]See Peter James Wilson (n.12), pp.128-29; and John Gould, 'Tragedy and Collective Experience', in M. S. Silk (n.11), pp.217-43 (pp.218-21).

[15]Edith Hall calls tragedy a 'polyphonic' form precisely because it allows the voices of minority groups to be heard, in 'The Sociology of Athenian Tragedy,' in Easterling (n.3), pp.93-126 (p.118).

[16]Gould adopts the opinion that, because the choruses are often socially marginal, they cannot speak for the democratic *polis* (n.14) pp.220-21. Goldhill contends that the social marginality of the chorus does not need to mean a lack of authority in the *polis.* One of the important roles of the chorus is to represent precisely the authority of the collective, which brings to the theatre such authoritative elements as collective knowledge, tradition, and gnomic wisdoms. It thus represents the group against the individual to point up the constant debate in Athenian democracy between the responsibilities and authority of the state versus the individual. See Goldhill (n.11), pp.249, 253. See also Simon Goldhill on this theme in *Reading Greek Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp.269-70.

conventional non-interventionist role of the tragic chorus, because a chorus of young men would have appeared absurd not interfering in the fictional atrocities going on off stage.[17]

Then again, others have noted that, especially in the case of Euripides, there are many female choruses because there are so many female protagonists. Hose seeks to show very close affinities between chorus and main protagonist, noting that the chorus in Euripides often matches the protagonist in terms not only of sex, but also age and family situation, citing as examples *Hippolytus,* where Phaedra has a chorus of free young women from Troezen, and *Iphigenia in Tauris,* where there is a chorus of Greek temple slaves to relate to Iphigenia.[18] Whilst this is a very neat analysis, it pushes the comparisons too far. In the above examples, for instance, Phaedra is a queen, who is attended by a chorus of ordinary free-born women of the neighbourhood. In *Medea*, the protagonist is not only of royal blood, but also a foreigner, whilst the chorus of Corinthian women, although alike in terms of gender and family situation, are utterly dissimilar to her in status.

This difference in status between main protagonist and chorus can be found in many tragedies. It is hardly surprising, given the fact that it is in the nature of tragedy to depict the traditional characters of myth who are all high-born and of royal families. The chorus is always of a lower social rank. The argument that the Euripidean chorus is chosen to be as close to the protagonist as possible is not a particularly fool-proof one, even though it may be that a sufficient level of similarity between main protagonist and chorus is required so that the chorus can credibly appear the confidante of the main protagonist. By this method, the protagonist's thoughts and feelings are made accessible to the audience in dialogue with the chorus, e.g. in *Medea*

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[17]G. M. A. Grube, *The Drama of Euripides* (London: Methuen, 1941), p.104. See also Castellani (n.4), pp.4, 10.

[18]See Hose (n.7), pp.17-19.

and *Hecuba.*[19]

Another group of critics, including Gould and Wilson, explore, albeit only to a limited extent, the female choruses in Aeschylus and Euripides. They both suggest that the female chorus often represents the voice of the excluded and vulnerable, for whom the utterances of the heroic protagonist are totally alien and perceived as brutally destructive.[20] When this is translated into the language of the fifth-century *polis*, the character of the chorus as an outsider group, without the rights of the citizen, alien to the prevailing *polis* (male) ideology, can be seen as a metaphor for those groups which were excluded from the *polis* club and thereby became a 'source of considerable anxiety' to it,[21] and the perfect site of the 'Other' to the male Athenian viewer.[22]

Finally, there has been a recent revival of interest in considering the tragic chorus in the context of the traditional female choral activity which took place in Archaic rituals. Claude Calame investigated the debt of the female tragic chorus to the

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[19]See Castellani (n.4), p.10. This reasoning seems entirely credible, but also falls short of providing a full explanation, as there are instances where the theory does not apply. Two come to mind immediately: *Bacchae* and *Alcestis*. We do not lack insights into the character of Pentheus because he lacks a sympathetic male chorus, and we are made fully aware of the bitter grief of both Admetus and Alcestis, even though the chorus constitutes men of Pherae. Clearly, other dramatic techniques can be employed, such as slave confidantes, messenger speeches, monologues, etc, so that the audience gains intimate access to the thoughts of the protagonist, and the need for a privy chorus is obviated.

[20]See Gould (n.14), p.222 (of Euripides' female choruses).

[21]See Peter James Wilson (n.12), p.175 (of Aeschylus's *Supplices*).

[22]For critics who champion the view of the theatre as the site of self-exploration through the 'Other', see Goldhill (n.16), p.61; Goldhill (n.11), p.253; Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); *passim*; N. T. Croally, *Euripidean Polemic: 'The Trojan Women' and the Function of Tragedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.52-53; and (for woman especially as 'Other'), Froma I. Zeitlin, 'Playing the Other: Theater, Theatricality and the Feminine in Greek Drama', in Zeitlin (n.2), pp.341-74. None of these focuses centrally on the female chorus in their formulations of the 'Other'.

choruses of Archaic lyric, which were most often made up of young women (*parthenoi*).[23] Whilst admitting that there are a great many differences between female choral activity in Archaic rituals and the choral function in Classical drama, Calame still sees the latter as inheriting much from the former. He catalogues all the similarities between the choral forms of the Archaic period and those of the tragic stage: comparable rhythms, dialectical peculiarities, lexical usages, and ritual formulae, but notes the fundamental shift from ritual celebration to dramatic representation. The chorus has turned into an essentially mimetic and fictional body, with the performative utterances of those carrying out a ritual for a god transformed into narration and description of those actions.[24] Classical drama remains, like Archaic choral ritual, a

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[23]Claude Calame catalogued a great number of rituals and myths pertaining to groups of young women in the Archaic period in his ground-breaking study *Les Choeurs de jeunes filles en Grèce archaïque*, 2 vols (Rome: Ateneo and Bizzarri, 1977). He claims that myth and iconography in Archaic and Classical times show that the choral group was more often female than male. He also provides convincing evidence that the chorus was most often made up of adolescent females. See the translation, *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece: Their Morphology, Religious Role and Social Function,* by Derek Collins and Jane Orion (Lanham, Maryland and London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), pp.25-30. Easterling notes also the familiarity of the Greeks long before tragedy with the concept of group worship in festivals enacted by celebrants through formal songs and dances. She uses as a paradigmatic example of this the divine female group of the Muses imagined as a divine *choros* singing and dancing to the sound of Apollo's lyre to honour their father Zeus. She also notes that, paradoxically after such an influential image of the *choros*, neither the dramatic nor the dithyrambic *choros* allowed the participation of females. See P. E. Easterling, 'Form and Performance', in Easterling (n.3), pp.151-77 (p.157).

[24]See Claude Calame, 'From Choral Poetry to Tragic Stasimon: The Enactment of Women's Song', *Arion,* 3.1 (1995-96), 136-54 (pp.136-48). Similarities, in terms of the competitive nature of both Archaic and dramatic choruses, are also noted by Steven H. Lonsdale, '*Homeric Hymn to Apollo*: Prototype and Paradigm of Choral Performance', *Arion* 3.1 (1995-96), 25-40 (pp.25, 31). Note that *Arion* 3.1 (1994-95) and *Arion* 4.1 (1996) is a double issue devoted to the chorus, called *The Chorus in Greek Tragedy and Culture,* ed. by Herbert Golder and Stephen Scully. It contains many important articles, and is a show-case for contemporary approaches to the chorus. In the part which focuses on the transition of the Archaic to the Classical chorus, see especially (apart from the Calame and Lonsdale), Bacon (pp.6-24); Nagy (pp.41-55); and Henrichs (pp.56-111).

didactic medium. The difference is that instead of the performers undergoing a ritual transformation through their own ritual involvement, it is the citizen viewers of tragedy who are transformed through emotions raised by the narrative performance.[25] I propose in response to this hypothesis that the generation of cathartic emotions is aided especially by a female chorus in its narrative and descriptive function, as the female was considered better able to articulate and provoke emotion. [26]

My approach to the chorus in this chapter, however, has closest affiliations with insights in the work of Segal and Gould. My departure from their contributions to the debate is to add that there are qualities in the female which fit their analyses of the importance of the choral perspective, namely her emotionality which inspires both the narration of past events and present misfortunes and an ability to induce emotional release through lamentation for the self and others.[27] Gould highlights the importance of the chorus as the voice of the anonymous collective, whose response is essentially different from that of the main protagonists or heroes, because of its collective social memory and the way it gives group expression to its experiences (Gould, pp.222-24). The examples of Aeschylus's *Supplices* and Euripides' *Phoenissae* show collectives of females, who, although they are socially marginal, can articulate traditions and

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[25]See Calame in translation (n.23), pp.140-41, 222ff, 240 for an understanding of Archaic choral activity as 'tribal initiation', and the pedagogical value of participation in the Archaic chorus.

[26]There have been other attempts to see the origins of the tragic chorus as relating to previous female rituals. For instance, Richard Seaford understands the origins of drama as being partly sprung from the Dionysiac cults of the female Maenadic *thiasoi*, re-enacting the sacrifice of Dionysus and lamentation over him. He notes with interest that tragic choruses often represent females, even though the traditional myths drawn upon do not require a female rather than a male chorus. See Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp.257-75, especially pp.272 and 327.

[27]Charles Segal, 'Catharsis, Audience, and Closure in Greek Tragedy', in Silk (n.11), pp.149-72; Charles Segal, *Euripides and the Poetics of Sorrow: Art, Gender, and Commemoration in 'Alcestis', 'Hippolytus' and 'Hecuba'* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1993); and Gould (n.14).

community memories of the distant past which are lost to the main protagonists as individuals (Gould, p.226). A keen social memory and inclination to narrate inherited stories, however, was an activity typically thought of as *female*. This suggests to me an added reason to locate the source of this collective anonymity in a female chorus.

Segal sees the importance of the chorus as lying, not so much in its ability to render the anonymous collective experience, but more precisely in its ability to effect a public sharing of grief and catharsis in the audience by enacting scenes of ritual lament and the ready release of tears.[28] This emotion effects a bond of common humanity in the audience as a response to the tragedy.

I would add to this analysis that, because of women's closer affiliation with emotion and raising all kinds of emotions in others, she is even better placed to carry out the choral role as outlined in Segal's analysis.[29]

Part 2

The emotionality of women and the emotions in the tragic theatre

The nature of woman as reflected in biological treatises, philosophy and dramatic literature of the Classical period is understood as much more emotional than that of a man.[30] This greater emotionality broadly underpins the conception of woman as a

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[28]Segal, *Euripides and the Poetics of Sorrow* (n.27), p.16

[29]Hall (n.15), p.106 compiled independently several reasons which are close to my own as to why there were so many female figures on the Athenian stage. Her primary interest does not, however, appear to be in the chorus, but rather in single tragic heroines. She lists amongst her reasons: women's role in funerary lamentation; the Dionysiac origin of tragedy; woman as the 'Other' of masculine identity; and the greater susceptibility of women to invasive passions, such as *eros* and daemonic possession, which would make them credible 'instigators of tragic events, and effective generators of emotional responses' (p.106).

[30]The way in which literature, especially the medical treatises, both reflects and contributes to society's conceptions about the female is a topic discussed by Helen King, 'Producing Woman: Hippocratic Gynaecology', in *Women in Ancient Societies: An Illusion of the Night,* ed. by Léonie J. Archer, Susan Fischler and Maria Wyke (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), pp.102-14 (pp.103-04); and Ann Ellis Hanson, 'The

potential threat to the *polis* through hysterical behaviour; an indefatigable commentator on human events and the primary articulator of suffering in lamentation and the incitement to revenge in emotive funerary lamentation. These perceptions of the female render her the perfect medium for the tragic process of raising sympathetic and/or fearful emotions in the audience which are converted into the tragic pleasure which Aristotle claims is the fundamental project of tragedy (*Poet.* 1453b10-14). The emotionality of the female is located at its most poignant in the choral element in Greek tragedy. And the female chorus acts as the access for the male audience to experience emotions which it is not readily granted by society.

The perceived emotionality of women is referred to in many ancient texts.[31] Both in the Hippocratic corpus and Aristotle, a woman's psychological differences

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Medical Writers' Woman', in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient Greek World,* ed. by David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp.309-37 (p.316).

[31]As an example of the system used in this chapter to make reference to the Littré edition of Hippocrates, in Hippoc. *Mul.* 1.1, 8.12.3 L, the text is referred to as follows: *Mul.* refers to the specific treatise (*On the Diseases of Women*); 1.1 refers to the book number and paragraph number of the ancient work; 8.12 refers to the volume of the Littré edition and the page number; and 3 refers to the point number in the Littré text. Although the Hippocratic writings cannot be securely rooted to a period and writer, they appear to be the product of itinerant doctors who operated throughout Greece from the Classical period onwards. The compilation of works cannot conveniently, therefore, be attributed to an 'Hippocrates' from Cos (469-399 BC). It is thought to be, rather, a collection of medical wisdoms drawn together over a period which refer to biological theory and practice from the fifth to the first century BC. As these treatises have much in common with such other medical ideas of the Classical period as are found in Plato and Aristotle, the Hippocratic corpus is valued as a textual source reflecting ideas and practice current in my period of study. In addition to this, the gynaecological treatises concerning women, which are of particular interest here, are generally thought to have been written in the Classical period, due to their style, and anatomical and pharmaceutical knowledge. See King (n.30), p.102; and Lesley Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp.5-13.

from man are rooted in her physiological differences.[32] A woman's body is much softer and spongier than a man's (Hippoc. *Mul.* 1.1, 8.12.3 L), which allows her to absorb more moisture from her diet and retain it (*Mul.* 1.1, 8.12.4-5,10 L). This excess of liquid is stored in her flesh and organs until the time is right for it to leave the body in such forms as menses, lochia and milk. The greater cold and liquid (blood) content of a woman is also theorized by Aristotle ([*Pr.*] 879a26-35, *Gen. an.* 726b33-34, 728a21, 765b17-18, 766b31-34, 775a14-16).[33] Men, in contrast, have a dry, hot constitution, which is suggested by medical theory to be the normal, more appropriate state (Hippoc. *De victu* 1.33, 6.512.4-5 L, *Gen. an.* 748b31-33, 765b16-17, 775a5-7).

The biological nature of woman, especially with regard to her reproductive tract, brings with it some debilitating problems to her physical and psychological well-being. First, if menses find no exit from the body, they accumulate so much that they overflow the uterus, causing pressure on other organs, and the young woman becomes very ill (e.g. Hippoc. *Mul.* 1.2, 8.14.5-8 L; 1.3, 8.22.5 L; 1.30, 8.74.8-12 L etc). There are many cases of the problems caused to young girls before the onset of menarche whose blood overspills the uterus, can find no exit, and presses round the heart or diaphragm (Hippoc. *Virg.* 1, 8.466.6-8 L). The condition of the girl in such cases as

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[32]For insights here into the biological and philosophical assumptions about the female, I am indebted to particular works, some of which are mentioned in separate footnotes. Some of the important influences are G. E. R. Lloyd, *Science, Folklore and Ideology: Studies in the Life Sciences in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Hanson (n.30); Anne Carson, 'Putting her in her Place: Woman, Dirt and Desire', in Halperin, Winkler and Zeitlin (n.30), pp.135-69; Nancy Demand, *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994); William W. Fortenbaugh, *Aristotle on Emotion: A Contribution to Philosophical Psychology, Rhetoric, Poetics, Politics and Ethics* (London: Duckworth, 1975); and Stephen R. L. Clark, 'Aristotle's Woman', *HPTh*, 3 (1982), 177-91.

[33]Aristotle sees woman as cold by nature rather than hot, thus differing from the common Hippocratic assessment of woman (*Gen. an.* 726b33-34, 728a21, etc., cf. *Mul.* 1.1, 8.12.12 L). But note how amongst the Hippocratic corpus there is also disagreement on whether women are innately hot or cold (for women as cold: Hippoc. *De victu* 1.27, 6.500.1-3 L, 1.34, 6.512.9).

these is described as an hysterical and emotional one. The girl has visions and may want to kill someone or herself; she may try to hang herself or throw herself down a well imagining that death is a good thing (*Virg.* 1, 8.468.6-12 L).[34] The remedy in most cases is to marry the girl as soon as possible so that, through sexual intercourse, a channel for the menses is opened up (*Virg.* 1, 8.468.16ff L).

Similarly hysterical reactions are recorded as occurring when menarche is delayed for some reason (Hippoc. *De superfetatione* 34, 8.504.13ff L). When there is black bile in the uterus, there are hysterical reactions, such as terror (Hippoc. *Mul.* 2.182, 8.364.8-9 L), and when there are winds or gases in the uterus, the woman desires death (*Mul.* 2.177, 8.358.9ff L).

Second, as well as an excess of liquid causing seemingly hysterical reactions, the womb, when desiccated, becomes equally troublesome. If a woman exercises too strenuously; does not get the requisite nutrition to retain sufficient moisture; or is not fertilized, the womb dries out and rises in the body in search of moisture, and causes suffocation and resultant hysterical behaviour (Hippoc. *Mul* 1.7, 8.32.1ff L and *Mul.* 2.123-29, 8.266.7-278.6 L). In Plato, the emphasis is shifted from the more mechanical explanation of the desiccated organ in search of moisture, as above, to the organ roaming the body and closing up all the passages of breath preventing respiration, like an animal unsatisfied and 'wanting to give birth' (*Ti.* 91c).

Third, emotions themselves were also thought of as being liquid and bringing endangering wetness, which melts, loosens and dissolves its victim. Carson provides a convincing list of literary examples of the nature of the liquefying action of emotions as they work on a human. For example, painful anxiety 'falls in drops' (*στάζει*) on

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[34]Bennett Simon comments on the similarities between the bodily behaviour of a woman having an hysterical seizure and women who are involved in group ecstatic or semi-orgiastic experiences who display a lack of control and the sense of being 'dissociated'. With the uterus metaphorically at the centre of any female group activity, it is not surprising that the concept of the female group, choral or otherwise, had such emotive associations. See Bennett Simon, *Mind and Madness in Ancient Greece: The Classical Roots of Modern Psychiatry* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp.251-52.

the chorus in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* (179-80).[35] Because of woman's wetter nature, she is more prone to the assault on the body of such liquid emotions, and loses control more readily than man. By contrast, a man's thoroughly dry constitution makes him more able to resist attacks by liquid emotions, and hence to remain rational. Because she is softer than man (μαλακώτερα), as is the character of the female in most animal pairs, she is also much more moved to rash impulses, querulousness, envy, anger, tears, pity, compassion, despondency and fear (*Hist. an.* 608a33ff). Hall notes that medical beliefs such as these underpin the depiction of the transgressive female heroines in Greek tragedy.[36] Medea's lack of sexual intercourse is stressed throughout the play of her name (e.g. Eur. *Med.* 1366-68). Could her irrational behaviour have been thought of as resulting from a wandering womb? Phaedra is advised to consult a male doctor for her ailment, if it is something she can speak of (Eur. *Hipp.* 295-96). The female chorus here comments on the frequent occurrence of irrational behaviour among women when winds shudder through their wombs (161-66). The insubordinate behaviour found in such young women as Antigone and Electra exemplifies perfectly the type of psychic disorder faced by virgins before intercourse.[37] Menstruation, intercourse and childbirth are seen as essential procedures to maintain the health of women in their prime, and were recommended as remedies for virtually all woman's biological and psychological problems.

Leaving aside the medical texts, there are plenty of suggestions in philosophical texts that women have a dangerously emotional nature. Aristotle writes of the

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[35]Carson (n.32), p.138

[36]Hall (n.15), pp.109-10. Note also the important work of Ruth Padel on the symbolic associations between the female, madness and the tragic, in 'Women: Model for Possession by Greek Daemons', in *Images of Women in Antiquity*, ed. by Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt, rev. edn (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.3-19; *In and Out of the Mind: Greek Images of the Tragic Self* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); *Whom Gods Destroy: Elements of Greek and Tragic Madness* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995).

[37]Hall (n.15), pp.109-10.

deliberative faculty in women being *akuron* (without authority), because it can so easily be overruled by emotions. Her soul has the quality of the 'ruled' rather than the 'ruler', and by definition, is *alogos* (irrational) rather than rational (*Pol.* 1260a6-7). She needs to be ruled, therefore, by her husband in the way that a subject is ruled by a statesman (*Pol.* 1259b1). In real terms, this meant that women had to be kept under the *kurieia* (control) of a close male relative, so that her emotions did not run riot and bring her and her household into shame.

If we turn to dramatic works, we find a similar picture of woman as unreliable, emotional, hysterical and a threat to the family reputation. Beginning with Homer, females were considered to be more emotional than men, better articulators of feelings, and therefore better able to evoke the emotions of others.[38] Easterling notes that the Homeric women in the *Iliad* who suffer and lament so richly over the death of Hector prepare the way for the tragic heroines and choruses of the fifth century who are skilled lamenters (p.149). And indeed tragedy is full of comments relating to women's inability to restrain both their grief and their anger. Andromache explains that it is the nature of women to express their woes openly and gain satisfaction from this (Eur. *Andr.* 93-95). The sentiment that women are naturally tearful appears in *Medea* (Eur. *Med.* 928). Megara speaks quickly before Amphitryon, eager to tell Hercules of the family's persecution, because, she claims, women are more piteous than men (Eur. *HF* 536). Orestes remarks on women's unrivalled ability to evoke compassion (Eur. *IT* 1054), and, in a different play, he chastises Electra for her 'womanly wailing' (Eur. *Or.* 1022). Ajax recognizes that women must weep (Soph. *Aj.* 580), and Jason comments on the natural angry passion of women when they are jilted (Eur. *Med.* 909).

Whilst it was not wrong for heroes to show emotion in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, indulging in the boon of tears or excessive mourning was clearly frowned upon for men, as Achilles is reminded in the *Iliad* and repeats to Priam when he comes to ransom Hector's body (*Il.* 24.122-31, 522-24, 549-50). By the fifth century, it is not

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[38]See P. E. Easterling, 'Men's κλέος and Women's γόος: Female Voices in the *Iliad*', *JMGS*, 9 (1991), 145-51.

surprising to doctors that men are unlike women in this liquid-emotional respect, since their bodies have different absorptive properties. Hippocrates uses the analogy of a woven cloth in contrast with a spongy fleece both held over water for a day to illustrate the dry, non-absorptive male constitution in contrast with the female's wet constitution (Hippoc. *Mul.* 1.1, 8.12.6ff L).

In tragedy, there are several comments made by heroes who condemn their momentary lapses from stoical silence and castigate themselves for their *womanly* behaviour in weeping, e.g. Menelaus comments on his womanly tears in a disputed piece of text (Eur. *Hel.* 991); Hercules regrets that a hero such as himself has been reduced to tears like a mere girl, showing himself no better than a woman, and makes his son promise not to weep at his pyre (Soph. *Trach.* 1071-75, 1199-1201); Tecmessa describes Ajax's unusual behaviour of uttering piteous cries, the kind of behaviour which he had always condemned before as the mark of a cowardly and dejected man (Soph. *Aj.* 317-22ff).[39] All these examples of men condemning womanly emotion come from men who are considered the most masculine sort of men, great heroes, and these examples must be seen as illustrating the desired social practice for all men.[40]

But were there any categories of men, for whom weeping was more acceptable? When we do find men weeping in tragedy, they are generally either young and immature, very old, or have put up a great struggle to suppress their tears and are

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[39]For many more examples from Greek literature of the social expectations about men and women showing emotion, see K. J. Dover, *Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1974), p.101.

[40]Plutarch comments on Pericles' extraordinary restraint when he did not weep as his sons were dying of the plague. When his last legitimate son was lost, he finally could not endure the grief any longer and broke into sobs and wailing. Plutarch sees his behaviour as the mark of a man with a great soul and exemplary manly endurance (Plut. *Vit. Per.* 36.8-9). See Demosthenes for examples of ordinary men who are expected to tolerate heavy misfortune without tears (Dem. 18.97). But compare Aeschines' criticisms of Demosthenes for not showing the requisite amount of mourning when he held joyful celebrations for Philip's death, when his only daughter had died just seven days before (Aeschin. 3.77f).

ashamed to shed them, as in the examples above. The very young and very old could be given a license to show more emotion than mature middle-aged men because both were considered nearer the category of the feminine. This has important consequences for what we find in tragic choruses, since, when the chorus in extant tragedy is not one of women, it is often one of old men, whose age and general infirmity is stressed. The two cases in extant tragedy where the chorus is neither one of old men nor women, show that there is a tendency to pick emotionally dependent groups for the chorus. For in both *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, the choruses are sailors who crew the heroes' ships, and as Gould has pointed out, are utterly dependent on the heroes they attend, and thus, like old men and women, do not seem to represent fully the authority of the empowered adult male citizen of a *polis*.[41]

For the elderly, there were certainly some biological observations which could suggest that old age and femininity were linked through their lack of body heat. For instance, in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, it is stated that the old have characteristics quite the reverse of the young. They are cold (like women) rather than hot (1389b30-31), which explains why they are cowardly, as fear is a kind of chill (1389b32). They have weak desires (1390a11-13) and lack hope (1390a7). Due to this innate pessimism and weakness, the old believe that they will soon suffer all manner of evils and they consequently pity and weep more readily (1390a19-23). The pity of the young depends on the cognitive aspects of the emotion, whereas the pity of the old results from their own physical weakness. Therefore their emotions become ruled by their biologies in the same way that women's emotions are ruled. Furthermore, in Aristotle both the elderly and women, due to lack of heat, are unable to concoct substances. In the case of women, menses are seen as incompletely concocted material, second rate sperm, which could not create life, because the woman's body is never hot enough to concoct

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[41]See Gould (n.14), p.220, who cites *Aj.* 693-718 for the chorus's emotional instability, and *Phil.* 135-68, for the chorus's marked reliance on, and incompetence without, the hero's guidance.

it properly.[42] In the elderly, a similar lack of the ability to concoct, because of a lack of heat, causes the growth of grey hair (*Gen. an.* 784a31-34). The general statement is made that ageing in many species is a process of becoming colder and drying out (*Gen. an.* 784a32-34, 783b6-8).[43] Both the female's and the elderly's deficiencies in heat are considered therefore quite natural deformities (*Gen. an.* 728a21, 775a15-16).

Biological underpinnings for the greater similarity between young men and women are harder to find. In physical terms, Aristotle conceives of women as similar to children or young boys (*παιδίον* and *παῖς* both used). Women do not go bald because their nature is similar to that of a child: both are incapable of producing semen secretions (*Gen. an.* 784a4-6). And a boy resembles a woman in his inability to concoct semen (728a17-21). This suggests that women and boys were considered to share a cold nature, just as in the case of women and the elderly. In addition to this, young men, women and slaves were considered psychologically inferior to adult males because of the state of their deliberative faculties. In contrast with the perfect deliberative faculties of free adult men, a young man was thought of as immature, and in training to attain full personhood, as his deliberative faculty was incomplete (*ateles*); a woman possessed a deliberative faculty 'without authority' (*akuron*); and a slave did not have any such faculty at all (*Pol.* 1260a12-14).

There are plenty of examples from tragedy of old men and young men showing excessive emotion:[44] Of young men, Hyllus weeps when he sees the suffering of his father (Soph. *Trach.* 795-96); Philoctetes weeps when he realized that the Greeks had abandoned him on Lemnos (Soph. *Phil.* 278) and Neoptolemus, in the same play, weeps over his father's death at Troy and then the loss of his arms (360, 367-68); Ion

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[42]*Gen. an.* 728a18-21, 765b9ff, 766b16-18.

[43]The process of *drying out* in old age, however, would move the elderly away from the category of the female, who was innately wet. But compare Hippocrates, where the old are considered both cold and wet, i.e. akin to women, rather than men (*De Victu*, 1.33, 6.512.8 L).

[44]For the following examples, see Segal in *Euripides and the Poetics of Sorrow* (n.27), pp.64-66.

weeps at the story of his mother's early actions in abandoning him as a baby (Eur. *Ion* 1369ff); Orestes weeps when he recovers from his fits of madness (Eur. *Or.* 43-44); in Euripides' *Phoenissae*, Polyneices weeps when he returns to his exiled home, and Eteocles can only answer his mother at his death through his tears (366-68, 1440-41). Of old men who show emotion, we have examples from *Phoenissae* when Creon weeps (1310f); Peleus in *Andromache* (1200-25); Amphitryon in *Hercules Furens* (528, 1111-14, 1180); the old man in Euripides' *Electra* (500ff); Creusa's old servant in *Ion* (940, 967); Cadmus in *Bacchae* (1372-73 (disputed passage)); and the chorus of Theban elders in *Antigone* (802-05).

Beyond dramatic literature, Plato also endorsed the injunction that men should not give free rein to their emotions, and one is tempted to conclude from his condemnation of the feminizing principle of the theatre, that he recognized at a certain level the emotive character of a female chorus.[45] Plato saw the danger in poetry, exemplified by Homer and tragedy, as its tendency to cause strong emotions in the audience. These strong emotions, such as debilitating sympathy and sadness, were aroused by scenes of lamentation on stage, which he recognized as a specifically female occupation. For when a hero weeps and laments his fortune, he weakens himself by losing self-control and a rational attitude to events, and he also gives way to cowardice, terror and other disreputable emotions attaching to the female. The danger to the audience lies in the fact that the actor entices the spectators into the pleasures of identifying with his pitiable state, and sets them the bad example which they will learn to imitate for themselves (*Resp.* 388a5-388d5, 604de-606c). Such emotional excitability in the theatre would make the guardians, whom Plato is particularly keen to protect, 'more hot and soft', (*θερμότεροι, μαλακώτεροι* (387c4-5)), which means, in biological terms, more akin to women. According to

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[45]Amongst the works which have influenced my understanding of Plato's and Aristotle's views on the theatre are John Jones, *On Aristotle and Greek Tragedy*, 3rd edn (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971); Nicole Loraux, *Mothers in Mourning*, trans. by Corinne Pache (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998); Elizabeth S. Belfiore, *Tragic Pleasures: Aristotle on Plot and Emotion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Segal, *Euripides and the Poetics* (n.27); and Zeitlin (n.22).

Plato, weak-willed lamentation at the tragedies that occur in everyday life is base, and more akin to female rather than male behaviour (605d-e). Logically then, such behaviour should be avoided in the theatre. Plato saw the theatre as a feminine place, with the dangerous power to emasculate men through its frequent scenes of lamentation. And such scenes are closely aligned in his mind with the world of the female.

While Plato saw only the negative aspects in the femininity of the theatre, his pupil and successor, Aristotle, saw more positive results issuing from the kind of emotions stirred by feminizing scenes, such as the frequent choral displays of excessive grief. Aristotle, it seems, also recognized the central role of the emotive female chorus in one of the key concerns of the tragic theatre: to raise the audience's emotions. Whereas Plato had seen a threat in arousing such 'wet' emotions identified with women in the theatre, as pity, sympathy, and fear, Aristotle saw that it was better to arouse such emotions than repress them, so that through catharsis, they could be neutralized and rendered beneficial, instead of harmful.[46] The assertion that tears were, in actual fact, pleasurable, and that there was joy in lamentation, is a very common one in ancient literature.[47]

Aristotle recognized that these seemingly harmful emotions were needed to direct the spectators to the kind of cathartic pleasure appropriate to tragedy: *oikeia hēdonē* (*Poet.* 1453b11). It seems likely then, by the terms of Aristotle's argument, that, in order to stimulate the 'wet' feelings required for tragic pleasure to be felt by the audience, representations of the authentic originators of such wet emotions - women - would have been the most effective on stage. This argument would indicate a frequent use of female characters to heighten emotions. Such a view finds support here from Segal, who sees the communal laments which caused the most emotion in the audience as embodied in the chorus:

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[46]Arist. *Poet.* 1449b27-28.

[47]Hom. *Il.* 23.10, 98, Aesch. *PV* 637-39, Eur. *El.* 125-26, Eur. *Andr.* 93-95, Eur. *Tro.* 608-09.

> One of tragedy's functions may well have been to display and demonstrate that women's proclivity to excess grief was every bit as bad as it was supposed to be. But, paradoxically, it simultaneously gave expression to that release of tears, including male tears, that the Greeks from Homer on regarded as a 'pleasure'. Given the Athenian state's careful supervision and restriction of private lamentation at tombs and funerals, it is even possible, as Nicole Loraux suggests, that the theatre served as the area where this 'pleasure in lament' could find expression.[48]

Although Segal does not make it explicit, by mentioning the chorus as the primary instigator of scenes of lamentation and lyricizing of grief, especially in scenes of closure (pp.16, 19, 25-26, 234), and by mentioning that these songs reflect a women's world of emotion that would otherwise remain hidden and not experienced by men (pp.64, 233), he locates the site of the greatest emotional impact in the female group. Such an argument would explain why a female chorus might have been the preferred option in tragedy.

Although conventionally labelled bad, the womanish emotions inspired in the male theatre audience were, paradoxically, sanctioned because of the exceptional circumstances of the theatre: a ritual and dramatic occasion. As Zeitlin has suggested, when the male spectators saw themselves and potentially their own situation reflected in the female 'Other', they were opened up to such emotions as pity and fear which were not usually sanctioned for them. And this opening gave them fuller access to their own emotionality.[49] I would refine Zeitlin's argument slightly by saying that, rather

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[48]Segal, *Euripides and the Poetics* (n.27), p.64. Although Synnøve des Bouvrie does not comment on the gender of the chorus, for her, as Segal, the chorus is at the centre of the 'tragic workings' of the play (p.321) and affected 'constantly the nervous system of the audience' (p.97). She sees the chorus, more than any other part of tragedy, as being able 'to tighten or slacken the emotional tension and to stir the imagination' (p.321). See Synnøve des Bouvrie, *Women in Greek Tragedy: An Anthropological Approach* (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1990).

[49]Zeitlin (n.22), p.363.

than female protagonists in general, it is the female chorus in particular, which was the appropriate site for the male spectators' introspection. For if the male collective of spectators experienced tragedy through viewing the 'Other', its direct 'Other' here was, in some ways, the representative of the female *collective* on stage: the female chorus.

The emotionality of women underpins three allied conceptions of the female which informed the choice of a female chorus: first, women as hysterical and potentially dangerous if grouped; second, women as traditional commentators of events, keepers of the community's memory and articulators of lamentation and mourning; and third, women as potential inciters to revenge in their emotionally evocative lamentations. These three categories are now investigated through some textual examples.

Part 3: Textual examples of female choruses

a) Collective hysteria

Examples of hysterical female group behaviour, which pose a threat to the order of the *polis*, such as the uncontrollable groups of man-slayers like the Amazons, Danaids and Lemnian women, and the possessed collectives, like the Maenads, Minyades and Proitides abound in the myths of ancient Greece.[50] As we have seen, the ancient belief was that the particular physiological problems which belonged by nature to women induced such hysterical behaviour in the individual female, as well as in the female group. Whole groups of women giving simultaneous vent to emotion would be quite a spectacle on stage. And indeed, this particular kind of hysterical behaviour finds a common exponent in the female chorus. This provides a good example of the commonly presumed emotionality of women informing the choice of a female chorus. The emotive effect of the female group would have induced powerful emotional results in the audience, raising the overall emotional impact and tension of the play. I will concentrate on four plays in which qualities in the female inform the choice of a female

[50]See Richard Seaford (n.26), pp.262-75 for interesting theories on the connection between the female Dionysiac *thiasoi* of myth and ritual, and tragedy on the fifth-century stage.

chorus in this respect: Aeschylus's *Seven Against Thebes* and *Supplices* and, in less detail, Euripides' *Hecuba* and *Bacchae*.

In *Seven Against Thebes* excessive emotion in the form of the unrestrained fear of the chorus of young women is consistently rebuked by the male protagonist. The female group tendency to excessive emotion and ability to express it, is clearly depicted by the chorus here as very negative and dangerous to the ordered *polis*. The resultant effect on the spectators would have been to heighten their emotions of tension and fear for both the imminent tragedy about to engulf Thebes, and for the threat to the order of the city brought about by the hysterical women of the chorus.

A group of young Theban women (*parthenoi*) enter the play in the grip of destabilizing fear and panic, which is shown by the astrophic form used in the *parodos* (78ff). They proceed to rush about the stage in an hysterical way (*διαδρόμους φυγὰς* 191-92). Their entry song is full of inarticulate cries and repetition (86, 100, 135, 150, 158, 166-67, 171); invocations to the gods (87, 105-08, 110, 116, 128ff, 166ff,); a whole stream of panic-stricken rhetorical questions (93-99, 156-57); alliteration of hard consonants evoking panic and stuttering (78, 95); and virtually all of the opening chorus of the play is in dochmiacs, clearly characterizing the agitated nature of the chorus.[51] This style of language articulates the abject fear of the chorus of Theban maidens at the approach of the Argive enemy: *θρέομαι φοβερὰ μεγάλ' ἄχη* (78). Eteocles rebukes the chorus sternly (181ff), and bids it put a stop to its unrestrained behaviour, commenting that, as a sex, women are a terrible evil both to their home and the city when they are afraid. For through their overt fear and excessive panic, when they rush about hither and thither, they spread cowardice amongst the people (191-92). The enemy need not bother to attack the city, because the irrational female behaviour within its walls will rob the city of its courage anyway (193-94). This clearly depicts the female chorus acting in a destructive way towards its city. It also states here categorically that the plurality of the fearful women is a threat.[52] The Chorus represents an alien force which could plunder the city

[51]Webster (n.12), pp.120-22, 130.

emotionally, just as effectively as the enemy outside could plunder it physically: ἔνδοθεν πορθούμεθα (194).

Although Eteocles can control the women for a short time, female hysteria and the concomitant threat of disorder to the *polis* reappear again. This panic is seen, for instance, in the *stichomythia* between the irate king repeatedly requesting silence and the female chorus recounting its fright (249-63), and then in the first *stasimon* which is a slightly calmer version of the *parodos*. The *stasimon* also contains rhetorical questions (297, 304-11); invocations to the gods (312-20); inarticulate cries (327, 339); and a harrowing invocation of a city being sacked (338ff). And the theme of the women's uncontrollable fear as a response to the tragic events of the play keeps resurfacing throughout the play (419-21, 563-67, 720, 764, 790-91). Nor is it only Eteocles who schools the women in sobriety. The messenger bids the girls trembling by their mothers to have courage: θαρσεῖτε (792). And when the chorus fears that the messenger will bring bad news about Eteocles, it yields to emotion again: παραφρονῶ φόβῳ λόγου (808), and the messenger orders it to keep itself under control: φρονοῦσα νῦν ἄκουσον (809).

In Aeschylus's *Supplices*, the sentiment is once again made clear that there is something intrinsically threatening to the city in the collective emotion of women as demonstrated so characteristically by a female chorus. As in *Seven Against Thebes,* the hysterical Danaids of the chorus appear to be a mob, rather than a rational community, and, like the Theban girls they are continually commanded to be calm and prudent.[53]

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[52]Froma I. Zeitlin notes that the chorus itself keeps mentioning another group of threatening women, the Erinyes, who will fulfill Oedipus's curse (723, 791, 886-87, 977, 988). See *Under the Sign of the Shield: Semiotics and Aeschylus' 'Seven Against Thebes'* (Rome: Ateneo, 1982), pp.150-52. Kaimio (n.12), pp.40-42 notes that the chorus consistently uses the first-person plural in the *parodos*, which, she remarks, is a common phenomenon for a praying chorus, especially if it finds itself in personal danger (cf. the *parodos* of Aeschylus's *Supplices*).

[53]Zeitlin, *The Politics of Eros* (n.2), p.162 notices that in Aeschylus's *Supplices,* the female chorus is described repeatedly as a 'band' (*stolos*) (2, 187, 234, 324, 461, 933, 944, 1031), 'swarm' (*hesmos*) (30, 223, 1034), or 'flock' (*poimnē*) (642), which is in implicit contrast to the democratic masculine community of Argos (*koinon*), whose

The Danaids show no restraint in their supplication for help at the altars in Argos. In the *parodos*, they liken their cries to those of Tereus's wife, the murderess transformed into a nightingale who forever piteously laments the past and the murder of her son: an ominous start to the Danaids' supplications presaging murder (58-67). They mourn in piteous Ionian strains (69-76), and utter sometimes shrill, sometimes deep voices in their ritual laments (113-14), tearing their veils all the while in ecstatic grief (120-21, 131-32). Just as above in *Seven Against Thebes* (78), the women draw attention to their desperate situation by loud lamentation: τοιαῦτα πάθεα μέλεα θρεομένα λέγω (*Supp.* 113). Their father, Danaus, even advises his daughters to portray the evocative picture of flocks of doves, cowering in fear of hawks at the Argive altars (223-24). This is similar to *Seven Against Thebes*, when the girls described themselves like trembling doves, guarding their young from a snake (*Sept.* 290-94). The Danaids too describe themselves as 'running this way and that in their panic' (φυγάδα περίδρομον - *Supp.* 350, cf. *Sept.* 191-92).

When the king of Argos, Pelasgus, arrives, the women recount their tale in iambic dialogue, but for the key moment of persuasion, they change to lyric metre, and they engage in a lyric dialogue with the king (348). They show themselves to be equally as agitated as the women in *Seven Against Thebes* in the dialogue, with paired dochmiacs dominating the first three pairs of strophe and antistrophe. They hysterically threaten to hang themselves twice in the play if they do not receive help: first from the gods (154-61), then from Pelasgus (465).[54]

Both Danaus and Pelasgus bid the chorus to be calm and prudent on several occasions, reminding us, as in the case of the women in Thebes, that there is a great

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members use the principle of *logos* in the assembly (325, 366, 369, 518).

[54]As Kaimio (n.12), pp.36-37 notes that the first-person plural is commonly used for certain sorts of passages in Aeschylean choruses, for instance, those containing prayers. This creates a particularly importunate effect. Kaimio cites passages from both *Supplices* and *Seven Against Thebes* as examples of this. The chorus in *Supplices* also moves into the first-person plural in its threat to kill itself which again gives a more alarming effect than a singular (p.37).

threat in women's hysterical reactions. When Danaus first enters he commands his daughters to be prudent: *παῖδες, φρονεῖν χρή* (176). Pelasgus later comments on the fact that women always show uncontrollable fear: *ἀεὶ γυναικῶν ἐστι δεῖμ' ἐξαίσιον* (514).[55] When Danaus reports to the chorus that he has seen the sons of Aegyptus on their way to Argos, he repeats four times that it must remain calm and courageous, suppressing its fear (711-12, 724-25, 729, 732) in a speech of twenty-three lines (710-33). The chorus's immediate reply is *πάτερ, φοβοῦμαι* (734). In the chorus's following response of five lines, there are four different words describing its fear (734, 736 (x2), 738).

The following *stasimon* is full of exasperated rhetorical questions (777-78, 806-07); invocations to Zeus (815-24); inarticulate cries (825ff) and suggestions of suicide, by hanging (787-91); and by jumping from a cliff (792-99). They simply do not believe that Argos will defend them as Danaus reassures them (739). It seems that women cannot be calmed or encouraged to retain *sōphrosynē* under any circumstances.[56] There follows an excited lyric exchange between the herald of the Egyptians and the women, who shriek for help, as they are forcibly pulled away from the altar (836ff). Pelasgus arrives and makes the telling remark twice that the land is not one of women (913, 952-53), presumably indicating that the *polis* will not receive the hostile force with quite such hysteria as the female chorus has.

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[55]The line is disputed, however, with readings of *δ' ἀνάκτων* or *δ' ἄναρκτον* instead of *γυναικῶν*. Neither of these variants affect the point being made here, namely; women's fear is a dangerous and excessive thing.

[56]Helen North notes that in *Seven Against Thebes* and *Supplices*, the men are generally the advocates of *sōphrosynē* (courage and resolution), while the women represent excessive emotion. Eteocles accuses the chorus of being hateful to anyone who is *sōphrōn* (*Sept.* 186), which suggests a meaning of *sōphrosynē* such as being calm and well-behaved. In *Supplices*, however, being *sōphrōn* has rather the meaning of being modest and discreet, which is the common meaning of this word when applied to women (1012-13) Both meanings clearly relate to the need for women to remain under the control of men and within set boundaries. See Helen North, *Sophrosyne: Self-Knowledge and Self-Restraint in Greek Literature* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), p.39.

In manifesting such high levels of emotion, the female chorus would have alarmed the audience and raised the tension in the theatre. This effect would have been created partly through the perception of the threat to the *polis* embodied by a group of hysterical women and partly through the sheer theatrical spectacle of wild movement and emotion on stage. When Pelasgus tells Danaus to put suppliant branches on all the altars of Argos, because the Argives, on seeing them may thus be moved and vote to help the Danaids, he relies on the assertion that men are always moved to sympathy by the weaker/less brave (489). It is doubtful whether the same effect would have been rendered in the audience. When the female chorus evokes the practice of hysterical group behaviour, which is assumed to be an innately female preoccupation, it reminds the audience, rather, of the notoriously destructive power of female groups in myth. This behaviour thus contributes both to the tension felt at the present tragic events, and heightens the sense of foreboding for the murderous female acts still to come.

Sometimes the chorus in tragedy, while not itself behaving in an hysterical way, is closely affiliated with other groups of women in the play who do. And the passive female chorus comes under suspicion as an example of a female group with the same irrational and destructive potential.

In Euripides' *Hecuba,* for example, revenge is meted out to Polydorus for having killed Hecuba's son, when she invites him to step into the tents of the captive Trojan women ostensibly to collect some gold. The crowd of Trojan women in the tents is described by Hecuba to Agamemnon as her secret tool against her enemy (880-84). When he doubts their efficacy, she reminds him of what other murderous successes female groups such as the Lemnians and Danaids achieved in the past (886-87). When Polymestor arrives, she persuades him to go into the tents by saying that there are no Achaeans inside, only a group of captive Trojan women (1016-18). After the horrific attack on Polymestor and his children by the women, he describes them as 'Bacchantes from Hell' (1076) and 'murderous bitches' (1173). He continues the analogy of their nature as inhuman, and indeed, not even belonging to the terrestrial world, when he claims that women are a race reared on neither land nor sea (1181-82).

The female chorus in *Hecuba* is also made up of captive Trojan women (99-104), but because they traditionally cannot leave the stage, they remain in the orchestra commenting on the horrific cries they can hear coming from inside the tents when the Trojan women and Hecuba, 'their allies', are killing the children and blinding Polymestor (1042-43). Thus the women in the tents and the chorus are the same group in terms of the fiction of the play: female captives of the Greeks. They are only differentiated into two groups, however, by their dramatic roles in the theatre. Excessively violent and sudden action in a group of (seemingly passive) women is shown to be entirely feasible by the action of the play. The chorus and the women in the tents have the same alarming potential, as they both belong to the same category. The relationship between the two groups of women would undoubtedly have been recognized by the play's original audience.

The classic example of a female choral group being closely allied with other stage-women who experience hysterical behaviour is in Euripides' *Bacchae*. Here, as in *Hecuba*, both the chorus and the female murderers share the same threatening aspect in their natures: the threat of transgression fostered by the hysterical nature of the female, who is more easily entered by Dionysus than the male. Here it is the insanely inspired women of Thebes, especially Cadmus's daughters (1089): Agave (1106), Ino and Autonoe (1129-30), who carry out the *sparagmos* of Pentheus. But this does not mean that the chorus of the play - the female revellers in Dionysus's *thiasos* from Lydia - is any less transgressive and threatening. They are allies of Dionysus and rejoice in the death of Pentheus (1153-64), and only show some slight signs of disgust and horror when Agave arrives proudly flaunting the head of her murdered son (1168, 1200). Euripides could have chosen any chorus for his play, Theban elders, for instance. But he chose instead to make the correspondences between the chorus and the murdering women close. He capitalized on the ecstatic behaviour of women, whose porous and unbounded bodies were thought to be more easily affected (entered) by unknown and irrational elements such as the divine.[57] This

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[57]See Padel, *Women: Model For Possession* (n.36), pp.11-14,17.

would have left a distinct feeling of horror and fear in the audience. And hence the decision to make the chorus female is understood again as being derived from the excessive emotionality of the female.

b) Collective memory, articulation and lamentation

In ancient Greece, as in many other androcentric cultures, it was the women in the home who were more often the tellers of tales and singers of lullabies in their constant task of socializing children. Women were also the ones who originated spontaneous yet elaborate mourning songs about the dead. Nevertheless, it was men who attained fame for their narrative skills, since they became the bards and playwrights whose work was broadcast to a wider public. Because we do not have direct evidence from scenes of domestic story-telling or funerary songs, it is hard to uncover the important female role in the narration of stories and the maintenance of the social memory of the kin-group. Various sources from ancient literature, however, indicate the centrality of women in both the articulation of stories, the production of a collective memory of kin-group events and the lamentation of the dead. There is evidence that these roles were attributed to women because of their status as the more emotional sex. As a result of these roles being traditionally assigned to the female, the commenting and lamenting function of the chorus would also have found a perfect exponent in the female group.

Story-telling and the collective memory

Plato ascribes the transmission of inherited stories as most often a female preserve, ascribing it to nurses, mothers and old women, and on one occasion to old men and old women (*Resp.* 377c2-3, *Leg.* 887d3, *Resp.* 378d). And the concept of 'old wives' tales' was even a widespread notion in the ancient world (Plato *Lysis* 205d, *Grg.* 527a5f).[58] As well as drawing on the traditional tales of monsters and ghouls, such as

[58]For further details on women as traditional story-tellers, see, See Richard Buxton, *Imaginary Greece: The Contexts of Mythology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.18-21; and Alex Scobie, 'Story-tellers, Story-telling, and the

the Lamia, and Mormo, female story-tellers were said to have drawn on tales of the gods and heroes. According to Philostratus, everyone must have heard from their nurse the story of Theseus abandoning Ariadne, for, he says, such women are skilled at telling those sort of tales and they often weep over them as they tell them (*Imag.* 1.15.1). In Euripides' *Hercules Furens*, it is Megara who tells tales to her sons when they get impatient and ask her where their father (Hercules) is (*ἐγὼ δὲ διαφέρω λόγοισι, μυθεύουσα* 76-77). It is tempting to imagine here that the stories told to the children were about their own father's many exploits. There is also a suggestion in tragedy that women told each other stories when they wove together (Eur. *Ion* 186-87).

Recently, it has been noted that if women of the Classical period survived childbirth, it was likely that they would outlive their husbands and be the oldest member of the household. Not only would they be a source of many myths and stories for grandchildren, but they would also, more importantly, be the memory link to a forgotten past and a treasure trove of stories about the ancestors of the family and family traditions.[59] This evidence, albeit sparse, starts to return women from the fringes of aesthetic production to the centre of the creative and retentive power of memory and narration.[60]

Turning to examples from tragedy, we see how these characteristic features of the female as story-tellers and memory retainers are developed in the portrayal of some of the female choruses in tragedy. Gould gives the fine example of Euripides' *Phoenissae*, in which the chorus of women are shown to bring a certain stability to Thebes through their shared knowledge and narration of the history of the city (638ff,

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Novel in Graeco-Roman Antiquity', *RhM*, 122 (1979), 229-59 (pp.244-47).

[59]Karen Stears, 'Death Becomes Her: Gender and Athenian Death Ritual', in *The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece*, ed. by Sue Blundell and Margaret Williamson (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp.113-27 (p.123).

[60]To add to this image of woman as preserver of memory and story-teller, Aristotle claims that a common characteristic of the female of all species is her better memory than the male (*μνημονικώτερον Hist. an.* 608b13).

818ff). Although in many ways marginal to the Greek civic world, since they are non-Greek, unmarried, female, slave-girls and temporarily homeless (in the sense that they are on a journey to Delphi to serve Apollo), these women have ties of kinship with Thebes and a shared ancestry (218, 239-49 (disputed lines), 291-92). But more than this, their *collective* memory of the stories of Thebes which they heard at home far away (819), and their recounting of Thebes' history, brings a sense of stability and tradition to the play, which is otherwise focused on immediate, destabilizing and destructive events.[61]

To this example of the importance of female choral narration of stories from the past can be added a second: the chorus in Aeschylus's *Supplices.* The chorus of Danaus's daughters also appears very alien to Argos, but, like the Phoenician women, it shares ancestry with the city to which it has come. The chorus in this case brings the threat of war with it, but by virtue of the way it recounts tales from its shared past with Argos and dwells on the myths of Io and Zeus, it detracts from the potentially destabilizing and threatening situation it brings to Argos, and unites itself with Argos through the stabilizing effect of the collective memories of a shared history (*Supp.* 40-56, 154-75, 274-76, 291ff, 531ff). This difference is noted by Zeitlin as reflected in the basic differences in female and male discourse, where female *muthos* contrasts with male *logos*.[62]

The kind of narration which we find in the chorus, then, is the narration of the group. It is the memory of the anonymous collective rather than the memories of the individual heroes. The difference between these two recollections is, as Gould points out, fundamental to the effect of tragedy.

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[61]Gould (n.14), pp.225. Gould notes the stress on the term *koinon* in the play, highlighting the fact that the chorus community and the community at Thebes are inextricably bound together by their ties of kinship, shared ancestry, and above all, their shared memories (see *Phoen.* 239-49, cf. 16, 450, 692, 1016, 1222, 1323, 1483, 1572).

[62]see Zeitlin (n.2), p.126.

> The sense of difference, the sense that the human condition embraces both the individual and the group, and that all experience, even the ultimate, all-consuming experiences of the 'tragic', is to be lived through, perceived, and recollected collectively as well as individually, is so essential a part of the Greek tragic theatre that, in this context at least, we cannot perceive of 'the tragic' otherwise. (p.233)

It is significant that the chorus traditionally does not leave the stage, but remains, never reduced to silence, facing all the tragic events. It continues narrating and trying to explain to itself the unfolding disaster until the end of every play. The incredible power of the collective to continue remembering and commenting in the face of tragedy, even in such circumstances as the fall of Troy, is a recognition that when tragedy is experienced, whatever happens to the main protagonists, society itself continues and the collective body weathers the storm. The chorus's last words in *Trojan Women* make this point precisely:

> ἰὼ τάλαινα πόλις. ὅμως
> δὲ προφερε πόδα σὸν ἐπὶ πλάτας Ἀχαιῶν (1331-32)

The Trojan Women remember Troy and have words of lament for it, but they 'nevertheless' (*ὅμως*) go forward to board the Greek ships. Here, we have an example of the core activity of the female collective. It creates strong memories of the lost or dead through group lamentation, a role seen as innately female partly because of a woman's presumed greater emotionality.

Lamentation

The traditional functions of lament include honouring and appeasing the dead and giving expression to a range of emotions, thus bringing relief to the living.[63] It also preserves the name and thus the memory of the dead. The benefit brought to the lamenter through the articulation of sorrows is frequently described in Euripides. For

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[63]See Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p.55.

instance, the chorus responds to Hecuba's lamentation in *Trojan Women*, by commenting that tears, lamentations and the music of grief are soothing (literally, 'sweet': ἡδύ) to those who are afflicted (608-09). It is not only the singer, however, who is moved by lamentation, but the listeners are often emotionally stirred too. The recounting of one person's grief can incite another's personal sorrows, or indeed, their righteous anger. The chorus in *Trojan Women* claims that on hearing Andromache's own words of lament, it is taught to understand the depths of its own sorrow: θρηνοῦσα δὲ τὸ σὸν διδάσκεις μ' ἔνθα πημάτων κυρῶ (684-85). The dead were honoured through lamentation by being remembered and having their stories recounted. Seemingly, little has changed in modern Greece from ancient times. In exactly the same way, women in modern Greek folk song ensure a hero's fame by immortalizing him in song.[64] In the Inner Mani of the Southern Peloponnese, it is thought a bad death, if there are not enough mourners to reply antiphonally to the soloist singing *moiroloi* (laments) at the burial.[65]

It was not only the dead who were remembered and lamented in ancient times. We have plenty of examples in tragedy of lamentations over fallen cities, for instance in *Trojan Women.* Also a disaster affecting a whole nation warrants lamentation in Aeschylus's *Persians* when the news of the destruction of Xerxes' fleet reaches Susa. The implication of lamenting a fallen city is made clear in *Trojan Women*, when Hecuba suggests that it is precisely because the gods have destroyed Troy that it will live on in future generations because its fall will always be recounted in song (1242-45). It is a great fear to be unremembered, unlamented and thus invisible (ἀφανεῖς 1244), and the women's laments will ensure that the city lives on in people's memory.

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[64]Nancy Sultan, 'Women in "Akritic" Song: The Hero's "Other" Voice', *JMGS,* 9 (1991), 153-70.

[65]See C. Nadia Seremetakis, 'The Ethics of Antiphony: The Social Construction of Pain, Gender, and Power in the Southern Peloponnese', *Ethos*, 18 (1990), 481-511 (pp.490-91).

Women traditionally controlled lamentation in ancient society.[66] On black-and red-figure vases portraying the *prothesis*, customarily the men stand at the door in quite a restrained and orderly fashion, while the women stand close to the corpse showing quite distraught and unrestrained emotion.[67] On some vases there is a male figure marked out by white hair or a beard (perhaps a grandfather or elderly father). He stands by the women rather than near the men, and his activities are much more demonstrative than the other men's. This seems to suggest that, while demonstrative emotional activity was not expected for younger men, it was, however, culturally sanctioned for older men to show emotion. We would expect this from ancient biological assumptions about the old (see pp.104-05).

It seems that contemporary funerary culture in modern Greece has changed little since then in this respect.[68] In the Peloponnese, the men cluster in groups at the wake showing dignified restraint and make only visual contact with the dead, while the women show great intimacy with the corpse, singing emotionally and caressing it.[69] It is still a very much debated topic whether women had, and indeed, still have, this role through a perceived greater emotionality; through an extension of their role as preservers of the kin-group memory; a perceived closer association with the natural processes of dying, through analogy with their role in birth, lactation and

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[66]See, for example, the many Solonian legislations restricting especially the activities of women in funerary rituals, suggesting that they were prominent (Cic. *Leg.* 2.59, 2.64, Plut. *Vit. Sol.* 21.5-7, [Dem.] 43.62-63).

[67]For a more detailed analysis, see H. A. Shapiro, 'The Iconography of Mourning in Athenian Art', *AJA*, 95 (1991), 629-56.

[68]For contemporary mourners see Seremetakis (n.65); Alexiou (n.63); Gail Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women's Laments and Greek Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992); and Anna Caraveli, 'The Bitter Wounding: The Lament as Social Protest in Rural Greece', in *Gender and Power in Rural Greece*, ed. by Jill Dubisch (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp.169-94.

[69]Seremetakis (n.65), pp.486-88.

menstruation; or as a result of their standing in society as a lower status group.[70] For whatever reason women had this role, the women of the ancient world, were certainly held to show more emotion than men when they lamented. This belief had important implications for the portrayal of female lamenters in tragedy.

Two of the commonest words for lament are *thrēnos* and *goos,* and in Homer these terms are differentiated. In Hector's *prothesis*, there is a distinction between the *thrēnos* of the professional soloist of either sex who sings the funeral song and the rhythmical *goos* (wailing) of the next of kin (*Il.* 24.720-23, see also *Il.*18.50-96, 314-55, and *Od.* 24.43-64). According to Alexiou, this points to the origin of lament in the antiphonal singing of two groups of mourners - strangers and kinswomen - each singing a verse, followed by a refrain in unison.[71] In Homer, the antiphonal element had already become less pronounced and the refrain had become considerably reduced, which was a trend set to continue in the Archaic period. In fifth-century tragedy, however, whilst there are several forms of lamentation, the *kommos* is introduced, and is the nearest equivalent to the original antiphonal style. It is found, for instance, in Aeschylus's *Choephoroe* (306-478) between Orestes and Electra (Agamemnon's next of kin), and the chorus of female libation bearers. A *kommos* is defined by Aristotle as a tragic lament in dialogue between actors and chorus (*Poet.* 1452b24-25).

Such lamentation-narration is important in tragedy for three reasons. First, it is the means by which the women face the tragedy of the play and survive. Second, the female group's lamentation preserves the memory of the past events, and thus gives the play its aesthetic dimension as a story for posterity. Third, because of the female group's reputation for being the most evocative in mourning rituals, it stimulates the most emotion in the audience, which, according to Aristotle, was one of the primary goals of tragedy. It is not surprising if female choruses were chosen to carry out this complex role. The perfect example of a female chorus carrying out these functions is found in Euripides' *Trojan Women*.

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[70]Stears (n.59), pp.117-23.

[71]Alexiou (n.63), pp.14, 102-03.

The chorus has a key role to play in this tragedy, which is about suffering and finding ways to survive suffering. For one of the most important ways in which Hecuba and the chorus of Trojan women survive their crisis is by commentary and lamentation, which, as we have seen, is especially the prerogative of the female group. The chorus explains that the benefit to the afflicted of tears and a song of mourning is in the soothing that is brought to the self (608-09). Furthermore, hearing another's lament also helps an individual to recognize his/her own sorrows, and fully access the appropriate emotions (684-85).

The chorus helps Hecuba and the other main protagonists who come onto the stage in turn, express their sorrows in an antiphonal manner, just as in Homeric female funeral lament. Hecuba and Andromache engage in a poignant *amoibaion,* in which they lament fallen Troy; their lost children; their sorrows; Priam's death; and Hector's death, to which the chorus responds that there is relief in articulating sorrows together (577-608). They claim that their despair is total at this moment, but the fact that the chorus and Hecuba are still able to articulate their woes is a sign that they have not been totally destroyed by the tragedy. Hecuba had asked at a desperate moment earlier in the play the rhetorical question:: 'Why sing a lament?' (*τί δὲ θρηνῆσαι;* 111, see also the rhetorical questions at 106-7, 110).[72] The question highlights the meaning of the articulation of lamentation in tragedy. Although Hecuba profoundly doubts the gods in this play, she never really doubts the benefit of expressing her grief. It is not only that lamentation is the only recourse left to her, as she claims: 'Of this, at least, I am in control' (*τῶνδε γὰρ ἄρχομεν* 795), more importantly, it is the way in which the women keep the impending chaos at bay. They use the lyric response of lamentation to reflect on the past, and understand the future. They do not fall into a collapsed silence, but use a typically female response to tragedy. The fact that they can still meet their grim future with words, rather than silence, shows that humans; the human group; the collective - manifested here primarily by the chorus - have the spirit

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[72]Such questions were frequently the start of a traditional lamentation or *thrēnos*. See Alexiou (n.63). pp.161-62.

to survive even the worst circumstances. The resilience expressed by the chorus at the very end of the play, indicates its realization that life goes on, and shows this human spirit (1331-32).[73]

A second important implication of female lamentation-narration in this tragedy is the way it safeguards the future of Troy, which had been a concern to the women throughout the play. At the end of the play, the chorus in desperation cries out that the temples and the city will become nameless (*ἀνώνυμοι* 1319) and its name will disappear (*ἀφανὲς εἶσιν* 1322). In fact, Troy is no longer a city (*ἄπολις* 1292), and no longer exists in their view (1323-24). The women need not have been so negative about the fate of the name of Troy, because they have *already* preserved its name by recounting its tale. It is implicitly suggested that the existence of Euripides' play about Troy is proof of the city's continued existence in people's memory. Hecuba had expressed the view earlier in the play that the gods only inflict a major disaster on a city so that it is remembered in songs for generations afterwards (1242-45).[74] The female group articulation of the city has preserved its glory, in the way that female lamentation over the fallen hero immortalizes him.

A third result of such lamentation in the theatre is to affect the audience emotionally. As each new disaster strikes and the chorus helps the protagonists lament, so the emotional tension of the play increases. Hecuba and the chorus engage in a lamentational exchange over Astyanax's corpse, and the language is charged with inarticulate cries and wailing (*αἰαῖ αἰαῖ* 1226, *οἴμοι* 1230, *ἰώ μοί μοι* 1237), and the chorus calls for the ritual beating of heads (*ἄρασσ' ἄρασσε κρᾶτα* 1235). The most notable lament is the *kommos* at the end of the play as Troy burns (1287-1332). The pitch of emotion in this section is so intense that the members of the

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[73]My understanding of the end of the *Trojan Women* is close to that of Justina Gregory (n.2), but for quite a different, more pessimistic reading, see the review of her book by Charles Segal, *AJPh*, 114 (1993), 163-66.

[74]This is very similar to the sentiments of Helen in the *Iliad* who claims that the gods only create sufferings so that the stories of them can form the themes of future songs (Hom. *Il.* 6. 357-58).

audience would have certainly been reduced to tears themselves.

The final *amoibaion* between Hecuba and the chorus, while articulating their suffering most fully, also raised the threat of vengeance when the women beat the ground on their hands and knees calling for the ghosts of the departed to return. Only a female chorus could have acted out the part of the mourning woman, and have created in its dialogue with the dead such a menacing atmosphere. The final *kommos* starts when Hecuba utters the inarticulate ὀτοτοτοτοῖ, and calls on Apollo to witness his race's suffering (1287). The *kommos* is full of such ejaculations as ἔ ἔ, ἰώ ἰώ. Hecuba and the chorus repeat many expressions and sounds: ἀγόμεθα φερόμεθα, ἄλγος ἄλγος βοᾷς (1310), and τρομερὰ τρομερὰ μέλεα (1327-28). There is much anacoluthon, as the agitation increases and the noise gets louder until the final crash of the Trojan towers as they fall to the ground. There are many apostrophes including to Apollo (1288); the land that nurtured them (1301); Priam (1312); and the temples of the gods (1316). Hecuba is the first to call to her dead children under the ground: ὦ τέκνα, κλύετε, μάθετε ματρὸς αὐδάν (1303), and then sinks onto the ground to beat the earth with her fists. The chorus copies her actions and sinks to the ground to call upon its husbands (1307-09). They are all distracted from this eerie raising of the spirits by hearing the towers of the city come crashing down, and they turn their thoughts to Troy and its past renown and future invisibility. But the threat implicit in their calling on their loved ones cannot be overlooked.

c) Lamentation and revenge

This implicit invocation of the dead to hear and see what the living are suffering brings us to another important implication of female lament especially in a female collective, namely, the more negative explosive effect it can have on others. When Foley comments that '[a] mourning woman is not simply a producer of pity, but dangerous', she recognizes the commonly-perceived ability of women to incite vendetta revenge,

by stirring up the anger of male kin through emotionally charged lamentation.[75] This topic has been well documented by scholars interested in female funerary rituals.[76] And tragedy recognized the powerful and transgressive forces inherent in women's lament and used them on the tragic stage to do three things: to evoke revenge, to call up the dead, and to express collective resistance to those in authority. All of these functions served to raise the emotional tension in the audience. As Loraux comments, mourning women were certainly considered a social threat. But, she asks, were they allowed on the tragic stage so that the male audience, while recognizing them as a threat, could fantasize about them in the complete safety of the theatre?[77]

Like all emotions, weeping and wailing in lamentation was associated with women and thus required social regulation. And the indication that public female lamentation was perceived as something potentially dangerous is founded, in part, on evidence from funerary enactments dating from the seventh through to the third centuries BC from all over Greece which limited ostentatious burial practice and curtailed customary female lament. Many critics have noted that the brunt of the regulations limiting burial custom fell on women, and Foley and Holst-Warhaft in particular here draw attention to the reemergence of expressive female mourning on the Athenian stage as a reenactment, admittedly now in a *stage*-managed way, of the possible scenarios which had inspired the need for female containment. The best evidence we have for the sort of restrictions imposed comes from Solon at the beginning of the sixth century, whose laws are reported by Pseudo-Demosthenes (*Against Makartatos*), Plutarch (*Life of Solon*) and Cicero (*Laws*).

The speech of Demosthenes notes that the only women who could be involved in the procession were those within the degree of second cousin, or over sixty years

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[75]Helene P. Foley, 'The Politics of Tragic Lamentation', in *Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis: Papers from the Greek Drama Conference, Nottingham, 18-20 July 1990,* ed. by Alan H. Sommerstein et al. (Bari: Levante, 1993), pp.101-43 (p.143).

[76]See especially Foley above; Alexiou (n.63); and Holst-Warhaft (n.68).

[77]Loraux (n.45), p.11.

old. ([Dem.] 43.62). This would limit the visible part of the service to kin only, excluding hired mourners who would sing composed laments, designed to raise emotions (*thrānos*), rather than spontaneous laments of sorrow (*goos*). Cicero's *Laws* adds that women were prohibited from lacerating their cheeks and having a 'lessum' at the funeral. Cicero thought this likely to mean a sorrowful wailing (2.59, cf. 2.64). He also noted that the gathering of a large number of men and women was forbidden, in order to limit the cries of mourning, and thus control the escalation of grief.

Plutarch provides the most information, which focuses on the restriction of display of any kind. He writes that Solon specifically subjected the public appearances of women in their mourning and their festivals to a law which attempted to limit disorder and license: ἄτακτον καὶ ἀκόλαστον (*Vit. Sol.* 21.5). At funerals he forbade the singing of composed laments, the lacerating of flesh, and the bewailing of any other deceased at a particular funeral ceremony (*Vit. Sol.* 21.6). Plutarch added that for his own time, the *gynaikonomoi* could punish those who indulged in 'unmanly and womanly expressions of emotion in grieving' (*Vit. Sol.* 21.7). Were these injunctions made simply as a precaution against the feminizing effect of women's emotion, or was there something even more dangerous about female lamentation? Only in Plutarch is there a suggestion of a possible historical explanation for these restrictions. It is thought that they may have been inspired by feuding in rival kingroups, after Cylon had been assassinated by Megakles (*Vit. Sol.* 12).

It is clear, however, that there was also a more general reason why the restrictions were ultimately introduced. They transferred funerary ritual from the private sphere to state control and reduced the political influence of the old aristocratic families at the emergence of the democratic city. By virtue of this move from the private to the public, it was necessary to curb family involvement in the burials, which was primarily in the hands of the women, hence the apparent focus on female behaviour in the regulations.[78] Several critics have charted the way in which the

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[78]See Robert Garland for a detailed investigation of the pan-Greek funerary laws, 'The Well-Ordered Corpse: An Investigation into the Motives behind Greek Funerary Legislation', *BICS*, 36 (1989), 1-15.

establishment of the Athenian *epitaphios logos*, the annual public funeral lament for the war-dead, with its incorporation of the male state-sanctioned glorifying of the deceased at the expense of the private female mourning of them, also impinged on the autonomy of the female expression of grief.[79] For a variety of reasons, then, public female lamentation was curtailed in the Classical period.

Tragedy harnessed the collective power of female lamentation on the dramatic stage and channelled it into an effective dramatic form in the shape of the female chorus. The tragedians knew well that lamentation belonged to the female group and that it had tremendous power to raise fear and anxiety, and they appropriated the traditional female language and gesture of lament to rouse their audiences emotionally. Aeschylus's *Choephoroe* and Euripides' *Supplices* illustrate the use made of incendiary female lamentation in the chorus. In both plays the chorus laments against the wishes of the male authority, representative of the *polis*. There is often an implicit threat that this lamentation is dangerous to the *polis* as it brings damaging and irrational (female) emotions into the ordered (male) world. The chorus's laments do not simply stir up emotions of sadness and tears in the protagonists, however, but lead to feelings of anger and revenge.

The chorus in Aeschylus's *Choephoroe* has been at the centre of a certain amount of controversy. Not only have critics not been entirely sure of the precise identity of the chorus, but, there has also been debate about the discrepancy between their role as household slaves and their dominant attitude throughout the play.[80] There is no discrepancy, however, in this apparent contradiction, since the chorus draws its power in the play from its role in traditional female lamentation and incitement to

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[79]See especially Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City,* trans. by Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1986).

[80]Marsh McCall (n.11), pp.17-21 suggests that the chorus cannot be designated specifically *Trojan* slave women, but simply slave women of unknown origin who have been palace servants to Agamemnon for some considerable time. The fact that they are anonymous palace servants, he continues, is even more difficult to reconcile with their very dominant and 'take-charge', as he describes it, attitude throughout the play (p.21).

revenge, which, as we have seen, was considered a powerful weapon.

In the *parodos*, the chorus appears to be quite passive and enduring as they recount their lot which is simply to mourn the dead Agamemnon. The women draw immediate attention to their torn cheeks which have been lacerated in lamentation (23-25). They note that their position is one of a slave, so that they must simply do Clytemnestra's and Aegisthus's bidding, while keeping their hatred under control and hiding their tears (75-83). It appears at this stage as if the chorus will be a long-suffering, but commenting observer, as is the model for some other female choruses.

Electra and this group of slaves have been sent by the queen to offer libations at Agamemnon's tomb to quell his restless ghost. The chorus starts to show its strength and dominance over Electra and Orestes when Electra, who hates her mother, asks it for instruction on how she should proceed with the rite. She turns to the chorus quite earnestly for guidance and treats it with much respect as an equal, rather than a group of slaves (84-86, *ὦ φίλαι* 100). In the *stichomythia* that follows, rather than the chorus leader simply being reactive to Electra, she actively advises and persuades, and by the end of their exchange, she has persuaded Electra into disobeying Clytemnestra's commands and, rather than praying for the queen's benefit, she delivers a prayer of hatred and vengeance against her (106-51). The chorus instructs her to call for vengeance for the death of her father, insisting that it is perfectly righteous to take a life for a life (121-23), which sentiments are repeated by the chorus several times subsequently (310-13, 400-04). There has thus been a significant transformation from the beginning of the play where the chorus was quite subdued and obedient, to its later dominance and persuasion of one of the main protagonists.

The high profile of the chorus is maintained when Orestes arrives and joins his sister, and the longest *kommos* in tragedy (173 lines) takes place, which demonstrates the chorus's incitement to revenge, transmitted in the emotive style of the antiphonal song (306-478). The chorus has by far the greatest number of lines and acts as the primary motivator throughout. To the chorus's ninety-six lines, Electra has forty-two

and Orestes, thirty-five.[81] Significantly, the chorus starts the *kommos* with nine lines of anapaes before Orestes sings the first strophe (306ff). Even more significantly, the chorus ends the *kommos* with the last strophe and antistrophe and three concluding anapaestic dimeters (463ff). The women address both Electra and Orestes as children (265, 324, 372), which is not necessarily unusual for old intimate family servants, but in the context of this *kommos*, it suggests that they are in the more dominant position of leading the lament while the main protagonists reply to them. It is noticeable that Orestes and Electra never ask the chorus to follow their lead, and the chorus always comes across as the initiator, adviser and inciter to Orestes and Electra. So, at 265-67, the chorus orders them to be silent in their joy at being reunited, so that they are not caught, and at 376-79, it is the chorus which first suggests that the children will find a helper amongst the dead if they find the courage to take action into their own hands.

Apart from the power shown by the chorus in the relationship between it and Electra and Orestes, the chorus reveals its power in the incendiary imagery and language it uses to incite the children to revenge.[82] For the duration of the *kommos*, it keeps up its unrelenting attitude to the vengeance that needs to be taken, mentioning *Dikà* and the principle of 'an eye for an eye' (310-13), while encouraging the children continually with thoughts of the ignominy of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus as well as the righteousness of vengeance. This is all done with the intention of giving the children the emotional strength to kill their enemies (309-14, 340-44, 386-92, 400-04, 451-55, 471-74). For instance, the chorus describes to Orestes and Electra vividly how

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[81]McCall (n.11), p.23.

[82]McCall (n.11) notes several other ways in which the chorus appears quite extraordinarily dominant for its role as a chorus, and moreover, a female chorus of slaves. For instance, the family nurse, who is even named in the play (Cilissa), is subservient to the chorus, which issues instructions to her and rebukes her (732, 770-73, 779-80). As most nurses appear to have enjoyed quite a high standing in tragedy and epic, and were very trusted by their households, e.g. Phaedra in *Hippolytus*, and Eurycleia in the *Odyssey*, McCall notes the incongruence of the exchange between the chorus and Cilissa (pp.24-25).

shamefully Agamemnon died (439-43) specifically to rouse the children's outrage (444-50).

During the lament and invocation of Agamemnon, the chorus gradually convinces the children to act against their mother and Aegisthus. It is noticeable that Orestes and Electra sound increasingly more strong-willed and vengeful as the song progresses. They had started with desperate questions directed to their dead father, such as how they could reach him beyond the grave, and how they could escape their wretched grief and circumvent their evils (315-18, 338-39). By the end of the *kommos*, however, the chorus notes that Electra and Orestes themselves are praying for the day of doom (464-65). Orestes' last words proclaim that battle will be joined, and Right will fight it out with Right (461), and Electra prays that the gods will act justly in what comes to pass (462). The chorus, nevertheless, keeps up its insistence later in the play that the children actually do carry out what they have been inspired to do in the *kommos* (512-13, 551-53). The power of female incitement to revenge located in the chorus has been shown to be devastatingly effective. The scene would have conveyed some of this power to the audience in the eerie invocations to the dead Agamemnon and the bloodthirsty calls for revenge.

The scene between the black-robed female chorus and Orestes and Electra at Agamemnon's tomb must have appeared quite shocking, not to say terrifying to the audience of the time. The play ends aptly with Orestes seeing the approaching Erinyes and proclaiming their hideous presence to the chorus, who cannot, of course, see them (1048ff). It would be no understatement to say that the women in the chorus in *Choephoroe* are depicted as a fitting forerunner to the next chorus of vengeful females in the trilogy: the Erinyes in *Eumenides*.

The voice of the chorus in *Choephoroe*, as we have seen, is one of social defiance against those in authority. It champions those who have been oppressed by the rulers and legitimizes Orestes' act. A similar social act of collective female resistance to authority is not, however, so favourably depicted in Euripides' play *Supplices*. Here the female voice of lament in the chorus is very quickly curtailed and controlled by the male figure of authority, suggesting that its threat was commonly

acknowledged in the fifth century. The voice of female lament here finds no more perfect exponent than the chorus: a group of mourning mothers. As Burian has pointed out, the rational democratic discourse of the male city (*logos*) vies continually for supremacy with the private female irrational discourse (*pathos*) in this play.[83] This contest is seen quite clearly in the two responses toward the dead: Theseus advocates a public democratic style of mourning as was the case in the *epitaphios logos,* where the dead were given a common burial, praised and showered in glory for their sacrifice to the city. On the other hand, the female chorus and the elderly king, Adrastus, naturally tend towards a private kin-based style of mourning, as was the case in female funerary lament, where the sorrow and loss for the private family remained the focus.[84]

The chorus in Euripides' *Supplices* is a group of Argive mothers who have come to Athens to persuade Theseus to force Thebes to return to them the corpses of their sons who are lying unburied outside the gates of the city, having tried unsuccessfully to storm Thebes on behalf of Polyneices. They are a potent distraction in the city from the outset, disturbing Aethra (Theseus's mother) with their pitiful presence, so that she calls for Theseus to decide the issue (36-40). They are engaged in ritual acts of lamentation from the start of the play, weeping and tearing furrows in their cheeks (48-51, 76-77, 79-86). They must have presented a spectacle on stage with shorn hair and clothing unsuited to the temple where they sit in supplication (97).

Theseus enters and insists that the women uncover their muffled heads and cease mourning. He directs his questions to Adrastus claiming that nothing is achieved without logical speech (*διὰ γλώσσης* 110-12). This is the first example of the challenge of *logos* or *sunesis* (reason) in the face of inarticulate mourning. In this challenge, *logos* represents male logical discourse, and *goos*, the female emotional response. Theseus continually thereafter claims supremacy for the former and, in fact,

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[83]Burian (n.2), p.130ff.

[84]See Loraux (n.79), pp.48-49 for comparisons between the annual ceremony of *Epitaphia* at Athens and the various funeral activities in the play. See also Rush Rehm, *Marriage to Death: The Conflation of Wedding and Funeral Rituals in Greek Tragedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), p.111.

attempts to limit the latter. For he later praises man's reason (*sunesis*) and rational speech which furthers understanding (ἄγγελον γλῶσσαν λόγων 203-04). Theseus is resolved not to help Adrastus and the mothers because of the impious war that Adrastus had embarked upon. It is significant, however, that Theseus changes his mind when he sees his mother giving vent to *her* emotions (286-90). At this point she prevails on him to take up the suppliants' cause, and he changes his mind (334ff). He does, however, insist on the democratic means by which he will achieve his end, by going to the people and winning their accord by reason (*logos*). For he stresses, even though he is king, the city is free and everyone has an equal vote (349-53, cf. 403-08).

When the messenger reports on the success of the Athenian attack on Thebes and the imminent return of the bodies, the old king, Adrastus, is devastated and wishes to die at the thought of the return of the corpses (769). The messenger warns Adrastus that he should not upset the mothers, but Adrastus replies that it is the mothers who have taught *him* how to weep (770-71). This comment is very revealing because it clearly accords the the female chorus the evocative and provocative power of lament.

Adrastus starts the antiphonal lament of the *kommos*, calling on the mothers to moan in response to his laments, and they reply to his sad dirge over the corpses (798-801). When Theseus arrives, he urges Adrastus to be sated with his tears, and to turn rather to speech, describing the lineages of the dead men (838-40). Thus again we find Theseus attempting to quell the kind of grief which is focused on personal loss and suffering in the *kommos* (805, 807-08, 820), and to substitute an apparently more healthy collective appreciation of the fighters' deaths, as not a loss, but a glory to their homeland. Adrastus recognizes Theseus's request for what it is: a conversion from ungoverned (female) private lamentation to a more public (male) funeral speech of praise for the dead (ἔπαινον 858), as was appropriate to the more public form of the *epitaphios logos*. And so Adrastus duly moves from his previous choral lyricism to prose diction, and delivers an oration, rather than threnody over the fallen men. Here he glorifies their bravery and describes them as an example to the young (909-17). While the manly words of Theseus may move Adrastus, they have no effect on

the women of the chorus, who still champion the ideal of *pathos*. They cannot move to this more glorifying style of public lament, and in their odes reiterate their sadness in terms of what the loss of their sons means to them *personally*, recounting their pointless toil in giving birth to the seven men, and their own lamentable ageing without the protection of sons (918-24, cf. 955ff).

Theseus proposes that a separate pyre is made for Capaneus who was killed by Zeus, and that the rest are consigned to one pyre (936). This suggestion again may allude to the annual Athenian state funeral for the war dead, which included one large common burial. When Adrastus calls on the female chorus, however, to approach the corpses, Theseus immediately rebukes him, worried that if the mothers see the wounds on the corpses, it would add more anguish to their grief (941-44). They are thus not allowed to touch their sons' bodies, but will only see their bones after cremation (947-49). Whilst Theseus ostensibly acts to save the mothers from more grief, there is a hint here that he is attempting to keep control of a potentially explosive situation, especially when we remember his earlier negative attitude towards female lament. Theseus does not want to move away from the rhetoric of eulogy to dwell on the emotive images of the wounds and blood of the dead. For this would evoke more uncontrolled and thus potentially dangerous female lament, inspiring possibly sadness and bitterness in others.

The women are allowed to lament their sons in a *kommos* when their ashes are carried onto the stage in urns by their grandchildren (1114ff). Children carrying the ashes of the dead, was another constituent part of the state ceremony of *Epitaphia*, again marking in the play the symbolic transition from private lament to the public lament.[85] Ironically, it is the group of grandchildren, rather than the mothers, who talk of the need to avenge the men by bringing war to Thebes in the future (1143-46, 1149-51), and the female chorus does not condone such an idea. The mothers feel that they have suffered enough bad fortune and misery already (1146-48). The future revenge by the young men is later confirmed, however, by Athene (1213-26). In this play, the

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[85]See Rehm (n.84), p. 111 (n.8).

danger inherent in provocative female lamentation is appreciated, and measures are taken to contain it. Only a group of emotional women could have championed the private form of lamentation, over the more restrained masculine form, which is why the female chorus of mourning mothers was the perfect site for the threat of lament.

Part 4

Emotionality and male choruses

It has not been my intention in this chapter to prove that there was no place on the tragic stage for a male chorus. Rather, it was to show that there were certain cultural assumptions about the female which would have made her a likely choice for the tragic chorus. It would be instructive, however, to consider the characterization of the extant male choruses to see if they are similar or dissimilar to the female choruses. Through the perceived emotional similarities between elderly men and women, we find that old men could have been considered equally appropriate for the pathetic role in the chorus.

As we have noted already, of the extant works, there are fewer male choruses: there are two in Aeschylus's seven plays, *Persians* and *Agamemnon*; five in Sophocles' seven plays, *Ajax, Philoctetes, Oedipus Tyrannus, Oedipus at Coloneus* and *Antigone*; and three in Euripides' seventeen plays, *Alcestis, Hercules Furens* and *Heraclidae*. All of these male choruses represent old men or 'elders', except for two: *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, who are young sailors in the entourage of Ajax and Neoptolemus respectively.[86] Most of the choruses appear to be somewhat less than fully empowered, and more akin to women. To give just a couple of examples, the Argive elders in *Agamemnon* stress their infirmity on several occasions. They were too old to go with Agamemnon's expedition to Troy when it left ten years before, and now they admit to having only a child's strength (*ἰσχὺν ἰσόπαιδα* 72-82). Both Aegisthus and

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[86]In *Alcestis,* the chorus appears to be a group of male citizens from Pherae. It is not stated, however, whether they are old or young. They are addressed as *κωμῆται* (dwellers) in the land of Pherae (476), *ἀνδρῶν Φεραίων* (606) and *φίλοι* (935). In a hypothesis to the play, however, it is suggested that the chorus is made up of *τινων πρεσβυτῶν ἐντοπίων,* who are sympathetic towards Alcestis.

Clytemnestra draw attention to their impotence (1424-25, 1619-20, 1631, 1672). In Euripides' *Hercules Furens* the weakness of the choral group of Theban elders is stressed by the chorus itself throughout the play from the moment it enters the stage leaning heavily on its staff (107ff, 268ff, 312-15, 436-41). Their ode at 637f concerns the benefits of youth and the evils of old age. In *Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, however, where the choruses represent young men, they are not particularly representative of fully empowered, responsible citizens either, as they are sailors reliant on their leader and wholly dependant on his status (Soph. *Aj.* 136-140, 165-66, 245-56, 693-718, 900-02, 1211-15), and *Phil.* 135-61, 832-38, 963-64, 1072-73).[87]

It has already been noted that it was socially more acceptable for old men to lament (p.121), and that in the cultural assumptions about the biology of the old, they may have been thought to be by nature more emotional (pp.104-05). This may suggest that it was the greater emotionality of the old which made them suitable for the status of chorus. The eight choruses of older men, however, vary in the degree to which they show emotion and stress their passivity and age, and each play must be considered separately. In the two plays of Sophocles with choruses of young sailors, although they prove themselves to be useless without their commanders (see above), they do not show at all the degree of emotion expressed in the female and elderly choruses.[88]

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[87]See Gould (n.14), p.220 and n.15, who classes the old male choruses of tragedy as socially marginal. He notes that the tenor of the elders' utterances in Sophocles' plays *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone* are far from the civic discourse or democratic ideology of the *polis*, even though they are described on occasion in such terms as *andres* and *politai* (*OT* 512, *Ant.* 162, 806, 842-43). He also notes the social marginality and dependence of the two military choruses in *Ajax* and *Philoctetes* (see n.41 here).

[88]In *Ajax*, the sailors are sorry for their wretched position trapped at Troy with an insane master (*ἐγὼ δ'ὁ τλάμων*), but they do not engage in very emotional sentiments about it (596ff). When Ajax is dead, they naturally grieve, but it is Tecmessa who is allowed the poignant lamentations. They saw the inevitability of Ajax killing himself (925-28), and try to school Teucer to keep his mourning under control, and to take thought for Ajax's burial (1040-43). In *Philoctetes*, although the chorus feels sympathy for the sick man (507-18), ultimately it is not an autonomously feeling body. It does not get emotionally involved in the situation, because, as the men say, they

Of all the plays with older male choruses, three appear to retain a masculine style of unemotionality; three appear to give way to their emotions relatively openly; and two portray the male chorus in ways which are strongly reminiscent of a group of mourning women. The most masculine chorus of male elders is found in *Heraclidae*, which consists of old men from Marathon.[89] There is quite a large pathetic interest in this play, including an old man, Iolaus, who defends the children of Hercules at the altar of Zeus, but appears (at first) very weak and incapable of saving them (75-76). They are also defended by their mother Alcmene, who, as a woman, is weak (648-49), and the young daughter of Hercules, Macaria, who is willing to be sacrificed to save her brothers' lives (500ff). This would suggest that there are already sufficient sympathetic and emotion-raising characters in the play, to obviate the need for a very emotional chorus. The chorus represents, rather, the age-old might and glorious justice of Athens which protects all suppliants. This may explain why they are not more in the mould of the other older male choruses on stage who appear more emotionally vulnerable and weak. The king of Athens, Demophon, praises the chorus for outrunning much younger men (120-21). And indeed, throughout the play, the chorus stands up for the rights of the helpless sons of Hercules at the altar, arguing with the representatives of Eurystheus (101ff, 353ff). The old men are full of patriotic fighting talk against the invading Argive army (748ff), and they champion the glorious way in which their land's tradition has always been to help the helpless (329-32).

Similarly, the elders from Coloneus in *Oedipus at Coloneus* champion the rights of their suppliant, Oedipus, and attempt physically to stop Creon who comes to seize hold of Antigone and Oedipus (856-57), and indeed they find means to prevent him until Theseus arrives (887). The chorus also shows resilience against womanly emotions and schools Ismene and Antigone to bear what the gods send with fortitude

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only ever do and say what Neoptolemus does and says (1072-73).

[89]It may not be surprising that a chorus of old men from Marathon is depicted as particularly strong-willed and interventionalist compared with other choruses. For the traditional reputation of the courageous Greek fighters at Marathon who conquered the Persians in 490 BC was still widespread (cf. Ar. *Ach.* 180-81).

(1693-96) and to set a limit on their mourning for Oedipus's death (1722).

The chorus of citizens of Pherae in *Alcestis* also prove themselves emotionally quite strong. For although being sympathetic towards Admetus, who had lost his wife, and even suggesting that they will share his grief with him (369-70), they continually urge him to put a stop to his excessive grieving and to recognize that death is common (416-19, 872-1005). As Segal notes, this is an unusual play, since the main protagonist mourns expressively throughout the entire play. He is a hero, neither too young not to know the unmanliness involved in weeping in public, nor too old to be naturally open to debilitating emotion. He weeps like a woman. Segal suggests that when Admetus weeps and his grief is sanctioned by Hercules (if kept within reason), it allows those in the audience who identify with Admetus to give vent to their sympathetic grief too (1081).[90] Thus the focus of male emotion is not on the chorus in this play, but unusually, on the main protagonist.

Turning now to the three more emotional male choruses, in both *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Antigone*, the choruses of Theban elders, rather than advising against weeping, both give way to tears themselves, admittedly under extreme provocation. This emotion marks them out as sympathetically moved by the plight of Oedipus and Antigone and unable to restrain their emotion. A disempowered elderly male chorus on stage, weeping at the tragedies enfolding before it, would have had a similar effect on the audience as a weeping female chorus, in other words, to give license to emotion and provoke it in the spectators. For instance, in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, a messenger prepares the chorus to hear about Jocasta's suicide by bidding it to weep and mourn (1223-31). By giving the chorus this sanction, it also encourages the audience to weep copying the behaviour of the elderly men. Later, the messenger also prepares the chorus's response by suggesting that no one can fail to pity the horrific sight of the blinded Oedipus stumbling out of the palace (1295-96). And indeed the chorus's reaction of utter shock, fear and horrified pity voiced loudly and dramatically at such a climactic moment would have focalized the reactions of horror and pity in the

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[90]Segal, *Euripides and the Poetics* (n.27), pp.67-70.

audience seeing the sight at the very same moment (1297ff). The chorus in *Antigone* also can no longer hold back the springs of tears in its eyes when it sees her about to go to her death (801-05).

In *Agamemnon,* the male chorus of Argive elders presents the viewer with a mixed image. Sometimes they appear fearful and panic-stricken like women lamenting the death of Agamemnon, and are called weak and childish, yet at other times they confront Clytemnestra and Aegisthus and will not be silenced by them in their calls for revenge. This composite image of the chorus, sometimes, portraying traits commonly attributed to the female, and at other times those of the male is fitting in a play which seems to reverse sexual identity throughout. For example, we have a feminized Agamemnon walking on luxurious Oriental carpets (944ff); Aegisthus accused of being a woman (1625); and Clytemnestra with her infamously 'masculine-scheming mind' (11). The chorus draws, however, on some qualities of the female or (effeminate) elderly male especially in the context of lamentation over Agamemnon, which would have heightened the response in the audience.

The chorus delivers an ode at 975ff which reveals the great dread which it feels that something ill will befall Agamemnon. It describes in physiological terms the torment raging through its insides: causing its heart and mind to be in a whirl (979-83, see also 1028-33), rather like the torment, as we have found, that rages through women when their hysterical natures get the better of them. Confidence which usually governs supreme in the mind/emotions has given up her seat (980-83) and given way to a dread fear and foreboding lament (*thrēnos* 991). When the chorus finds that Agamemnon has been murdered, it oscillates between reviling Clytemnestra and Aegisthus and seeming desperate and irresolute. After Clytemnestra's vaunting speech, the chorus condemns her audacity (1399-40) and continues to revile her in the next few interjections (1407-11, 1426-30), then it laments Agamemnon and wishes to die (1448-54). It then shows its loathing of Clytemnestra in general comments (1468-74, 1481-88), but even here the carefully targeted venom begins to become diluted by a certain style of emotion which we have found in female laments. Distracted cries to Zeus abound (*iὼ iὴ* 1485), with repeated questions about justice (1487-88); repeated

cries of despair (*φεῦ φεῦ* 1483); and repeated calls to the dead king (*ἰώ ἰώ βασιλεῦ βασιλεῦ* 1489). The chorus asks the traditional question which often begins female funerary lamentation: 'How shall I weep for you?' (1490, see also 1491). It returns to cursing Clytemnestra and calling on the spirit of revenge and Ares (1505-12), but then collapses again into calls to the earth (*ἰώ γᾶ γᾶ* 1538); desperate rhetorical questions such as 'where can I turn?' (1532); and questions about who will lament Agamemnon and bury him (1541-50). It ends its hatred of Clytemnestra, however, on a strong retaliatory note, reminding her that the doer always suffers (1562). When Aegisthus enters there is still more bickering, in which the chorus criticizes Aegisthus, mostly about his effeminacy in not joining the expedition to Troy and requiring a woman to help him carry out his plans (1612-16, 1625-27, 1633-35, 1643-48). The chorus goads him almost to the point that he sends armed guards against it (1650-52). Clytemnestra puts a halt to the potential bloodshed, but the chorus continues to challenge the couple bravely for the remaining lines of the play.

The two choruses in *Hercules Furens* and *Persians* show the extent of emotionality possible in older men. In both cases, there is stress on the impotence and weakness of the men, and there is much lamentation and free flow of tears. Interestingly, however, in both cases in the most poignant scenes of sadness and terror, the playwright makes the choruses directly evoke images of groups of women mourning. Such a decision derives precisely from the fact that it was accepted that the image of women mourning would inspire the most pity in the audience.

In Euripides' *Hercules Furens*, the chorus makes a theme out of its age and inability to help Hercules' family persecuted by Lycus (107ff, 268ff, 312-15, 436-41). It is also very willing to show its emotion like a female chorus, and like them, it describes itself uttering dirge-like laments like aged birds fearing for the safety of the children (107-11 cf. Aesch. *Sept.* 291-93 and *Supp.* 223-24). The chorus laments wildly after Hercules kills his children and begins a funeral dirge with the traditional terminology, asking what mourning will suffice for such a catastrophe (1025-27). The chorus laments so much and so noisily that Amphitryon worries that it will wake the slumbering Hercules, and he has to ask it several times to control its emotions (1042-

44, 1047-51, 1053-54, 1060, 1067). The chorus responds to these petitions by claiming that it is impossible not to weep (1058).

Apart from its readiness to lament and its avowed weakness and incompetence, the chorus also resembles the female when it says it may not be able to help, but it can still join in with the Muses and Graces in victory dances for Hercules (673ff, see especially 685-86). It thus evokes a female model of choral activity to express its own nature and desires. The chorus claims that it will raise the Paean just like the Deliades (687-88), but, the swan-song will come from aged, rather than youthful lips (691-94). It mentions more singing and dancing in its next ode, when it calls on its group to dance for joy at Lycus's death (761ff), and it returns to images of the nymphs and Muses dancing (781-97). Ritual singing and dancing were traditionally more the prerogative of the female, and when the male chorus of tragedy is presented engaging in female collective song and dance, it evokes the female model for full dramatic effect.

In Aeschylus's *Persians*, Aeschylus was representing a foreign nation, where mourning behaviour was known to be different from (and inferior to) Greek custom. Eastern peoples were thought to be disinclined to control their grief, and thus were the opposite of Greek males. Hence it is not surprising that the chorus of Persian elders, being both old and womanish is allowed to lament so expressively.[91] But even in the context of barbarian mores, the old men evoke images of the female, especially mourning woman, to convey both the strongest image of the city's tragedy and to express their personal grief with the most clarity. The chorus describes the women of Persia groaning, striking their breasts and head, and tearing their clothing in sadness and fear for their husbands fighting away from home (120-25): *τοῦτ' ἔπος γυναικοπλήθὴς ὅμιλος ἀπύων* (122-23). Again at 133-39, the war is focalized through the wife's perspective who misses her husband and weeps in an empty bed. At the news of the Persians' defeat, many women, the chorus exclaims, tear at their veils and soak their breasts with tears, sharing in the chorus's own grief (*ἄλγους*

[91]For detailed studies of the play, see Hall (n.22), pp.79-84; and Edith Hall (ed.), *Aeschylus' 'Persians'* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1996).

μετέχουσαι 537-40). The rest of this particular strophe is an imaginative description of mourning Persian wives, and at the end of the strophe the chorus sings: κἀγὼ [...] αἴδω 'and I *too* sing the lament [for the fate of those who have departed]' (546-47). Women's reactions to the lamentable circumstances are never far from the chorus's thoughts. It is almost as if the chorus mimics them to ensure that it achieves the most pathetic way to mourn.

The closing *thrēnos* of the play, in which there is a sung dialogue (*kommos*) between the chorus and the returned Xerxes, shows the chorus of Persian elders performing mourning actions normally identified as examples of female behaviour (908-1077). The kind of vocabulary used here and the gestures are those of women in funerary ritual.[92] The exclamation of despair ἰώ is repeated continually (908, 974,

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[92]Laura K. McClure claims to have found linguistic differences in the speech of the stage-sexes in Euripides, which show for female speech a degree of pathos unattained in male speech. She cites such examples as ὀΐ being exclusive to female characters and ἔ ἔ, ἰώ, ναί, ὦ and ὠή, three times more likely to be used by a female rather than male character. Whereas she finds παπαῖ exclusive to male characters and ἐά and εἶα preferred by male characters (pp.41-45). She explains that the female preferences are drawn from the language of ritual lament. Because these expressions are found in choral lyric, which often focuses on lamentation, and because it is commonly females who have the choral role, these factors may explain the linguistic differences in male and female language on stage. She also describes a preference in female stage language for pathetic expressions such as τάλας, δύστηνος, ἄθλιος, and τλήμων, interjections, aporetic questions, intimate addresses with the vocative and μοι, such as ὦ τέκνον μοι, and addresses to body-parts with μοι (pp.45-48, 50-56). This language is considered more emotional and thus more suited to the emotionality which was meant to characterize women, but not appropriate for males. This kind of study is fascinating, but it does not take enough account of the *context* of the language. For instance, McClure states that emotional lyric is a woman's preserve in Euripides (p.59), but as we have seen, the male chorus of *Hercules Furens* uses such emotive language, e.g. αἰαῖ (1025) and ἰώ μοι (1031). We seem to have here a language which is not necessarily female, but emotional, or lamentational, belonging to both women and old men, and thereby only designated female through customary usage. This hypothesis could be tested if McClure's study were extended to consider the lamenting male choruses in Aeschylus's plays such as *Agamemnon* and *Persians.* There is no space here for such a close linguistic study of gender and language in these plays. It is important to note, however, that the language of the lamenting Persians and old men in *Agamemnon* appears to match a female's language of lamentation exactly, e.g. ἰώ (*Pers.* 908, 974, 1004-05, 1070-77, and *ἰὴ ἰή and ἰὼ ἰώ* (*Ag.* 1485, 1489). See Laura K.

1004-05, 1070, 1074), as are such mournful cries as ὀτοτοῖ (918, 1051, see earlier 268, 274). These reiterated cries produce a feeling of near hysteria.

Between 1002 and 1077, the dirge reaches fever-pitch when the chorus starts mutilating itself (the kind of 'harsh and barbaric' activity which, according to Plutarch, was banned amongst mourning women by Solon, see Plut. *Vit. Sol.* 12.8). It mixes groans with blows (1052-53); beats its breast (1054, 1066); plucks white hairs from its beard (1056-57, 1062-63); tears its gown (1059); and weeps (1058, 1065, 1069, 1077). Admittedly, this male chorus is different from the other male choruses of elders because it represents non-Greeks. In the eyes of the Greeks, barbarians had an excuse for their abandonment to emotionality because it was an inherent characteristic of the barbarian psyche which accompanied their penchant for 'hierarchialism' and 'immoderate luxuriousness'.[93] It is clear, however, that sympathy is meant to be evoked for the Persians by this play. The means chosen to do this is, once again, to evoke images of women mourning frantically, both in the scenes that are described as going on throughout Persia, and in the feminine behaviour of the chorus itself, coming to terms with its nation's tragedy.

It is vital to view each male chorus in context, as has been done above. Five out of the eight choruses of older men display emotional characteristics, which, to varying degrees, are similar to female choruses, while three do not. This result may be significant especially in the context of the conventional fifth-century assumptions about the elderly. On the one hand, assumptions based on biology suggested that elderly men were physiologically more prone to emotion, and on the other, social convention allowed them to express more emotion than younger men. Both these societal norms also applied to women.

McClure, 'Female Speech and Characterization in Euripides', in *Lo Spettacolo delle voci: Parte Seconda,* ed. by Francesco De Martino and Alan H. Sommerstein (Bari: Levante, 1995), pp.35-60.

[93]Hall's terms (n.22), p.80.

Conclusion

In this chapter, several fifth-century assumptions about the female have been proposed to explain why she may have been an especially appropriate character for the chorus in Greek tragedy. It has been established that woman's perceived greater emotionality, which gave rise to her traditional roles in commemoration and lamentation, provided the underlying reason why she may have been the preferred choice on the stage. In tragedy, emotive characters, especially ones who channelled their emotions into expressing their woes and lamenting freely, were the most powerful manipulators of the audience's emotions. Whether the female chorus roused feelings of sympathy and tearful pity, or, at the other extreme, horror and paralysed fear, because of the cultural associations attached to women, they would have had the power to touch the audience in a way that most other choruses could not. Such emotions were culturally inappropriate for men. The context of the ritualized event of tragedy, however, provided sanction for such feelings, and afforded the male audience the full pleasure in accessing emotions which were usually the preserve of the female.

This is not to say that there were no *other* reasons why the female would have been the perfect site for the tragic chorus. A female's greater perceived passivity and theatricality present two highly probable reasons why female groups may have seemed appropriate to the choral role.[94] Nor have I intended to say that there was no place for choruses of men in their prime, which may, after all, have featured frequently in the missing plays. For every drama required a different kind of chorus, and moreover, not

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[94]For the passivity of the female, and the way in which she could be seen in tragedy as a metaphor for humankind, which is controlled by the arbitrary cruelty of fate or the whims of the gods, in the way that women are controlled by men, see Padel, *Women: Model for Possession* (n.36), pp.16-17. Padel's analysis could equally well be applied to the female chorus, which, after all, is passive in the sense that it is unable to act and intervene to the same degree as the main protagonists. For the cultural assumptions of the theatricality of the female and her mimetic qualities, see Zeitlin (n.22); Ann L. T. Begren, 'Language and the Female in Early Greek Thought', *Arethusa*, 16 (1983), 69-95. As the chorus was traditionally passive on stage, it had to rely on verbal deceptions to intervene at all in the proceedings (e.g. Eur. *IT* 1284-1312). This kind of intervention, based on duplicity, was thought of as a feminine strategy and hence more appropriate for the behaviour of women, rather than men.

all female choruses would have had the same effect on the audience.[95] There were clearly myriad ways in which choruses worked on the audience, otherwise there would not have been such a large variety in chorus character.

This chapter does prove, however, that the specific perspective on tragic events which was culturally aligned with the female and female group gave her exceptional potential to shock and move others. This potential was exploited fully in the female choruses on the tragic stage, especially, it would be fair to say, but not exclusively, in those plays where the chorus has a quasi-protagonistic and supplicatory role, such as in Aeschylus's *Choephoroe, Supplices* and *Seven Against Thebes,* and Euripides' *Supplices* and *Trojan Women.* The qualities perceived in the female group which rendered it an appropriate vehicle of the tragic message must be seen in the context of the broader social significance of groups of women in the Classical period. A female group's dangerously high level of emotionality and ability to influence others raised anxieties in the male world. Attempts were thus made to transform the group's dangerous potential into art, and to contain it within the boundaries of the tragic stage. Here it could be viewed (and fantasized about) by the male spectating audience in the apparent security of the theatre. These attempts register, once again, the existence of an obsessional and unique anxiety on the part of the male Athenian public concerning, beyond all other outgroups, the female collective.

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[95]Space does not permit here further valuable study to distinguish between the different categories of female choruses. It is likely that a group of slave women was chosen in one play to convey a certain dramatic effect, while a group free-born women or older women were chosen to bring slightly different qualities. Whilst the category of 'the female' which I have set up in this chapter is a useful definitional tool to distinguish cultural perceptions of the female from the male on a very broad basis, the differences in fifth-century perceptions of different types of women within the broad category would bring further nuance to our understanding of the female choruses. The cultural perception of the female which we focus on here, however, namely; her emotionality, was universally applicable to all women in the ancient categorization system. Easterling (n.11), pp.23-24, has been one of a very few to notice that there are different sorts of female choruses in extant tragedy and to categorize them into types, such as local free-born women, captive women, women on journeys, threatening women. Future research could distinguish the choruses in terms also of age and social class.

Chapter 3
Aristophanes and the World of Female Discourse

Introduction

In this chapter I move from the representation of the female group in tragedy, to its representation in Aristophanic comedy, where a very different picture is revealed. Although there exists in Aristophanes' work an equally deep-seated preoccupation with the female group as in the other genres discussed in this thesis, this chapter is a transitional one, moving us away from the more negative depictions of the group which have been described in the first part of the thesis, to a more positive depiction of the group. Along with this change, appears also a change from stereotypic depictions of the female group to a more nuanced and authentic picture of female interaction. By no means always, but certainly, on occasions, it is possible to see in Aristophanic comedy an attempt to depict authentic female behaviour.

Throughout the thesis I have been charting the vast number of negative presentations of the female group, which offer negative depictions of a fundamental, if not *the* fundamental, outgroup to the male citizen ingroup. I have also shown how representations of free-born male groups, as analogous to the citizen ingroup, are generally not depicted in such critical ways. In Aristophanes, by contrast, there is a complete inversion of this normal situation. Here we find some very different representations of the male group. A critical stance is directly adopted towards several male citizen Athenian groups, such as the *dēmos* in *Acharnians*, *Knights* and *Ecclesiazusae,* and jurors in *Wasps.* In *Acharnians, Birds, Peace, Lysistrata, Ecclesiazusae*, and *Wealth*, male citizen relationships are shown to be poor, offering bad examples of community and cohesive behaviour. The tables are now apparently turned, and it is the male community, rather than the female, which is the recipient of critical analysis.

Concomitantly, we find in Aristophanes some surprisingly positive depictions

of the female group. As a sharp satirist and critic of his community, it was clearly the job of Aristophanes to step out of his own social group to view it critically, and to seek positive qualities in other social groups. Aristophanes' exceptional role as *polis* and political critic provides the exception which proves the rule: The male citizen group, whilst depicting other groups in critical ways, was generally accustomed to depicting itself in positive ways, which reflected well on the group and kept its self-regard at a reasonable level (see Introduction, p.8 for the critical, yet self-affirming presentation of the *polis* in Athenian tragedy). It took a comic with the sharp political wit of Aristophanes to show the citizen body its faults by re-presenting differently both the ingroup and the community's stereotypical presentations of its outgroups, especially women.

In this chapter, I explore two mutually exclusive views of the role of the female figures in three major plays featuring female groups in Aristophanes, namely, *Lysistrata*, *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Ecclesiazusae*. One view maintains that the audience would have been acutely aware that the female figures on stage were men dressed as women, and that the playwright was deliberately drawing attention to this metatheatrical recognition of the man behind the female character. This was done to have a joke at the expense of women in the context of an ancient quasi-drag-show, which exaggerated, rather than represented faithfully, female behaviour, as in the case of such contemporary examples of men impersonating women as 'Dame Edna Everage', 'Lily Savage' and Les Dawson. The other view suggests, on the contrary, that the fifth-century audience of Aristophanes' plays would have perceived his female figures as representing real women, albeit sometimes in comically exaggerated form.

These views are propounded respectively by Lauren Taaffe and David Cohen. According to Taaffe, Aristophanes never attempted to create female characters as anything other than men costumed as women. She concludes that all female figures in Aristophanes are exploited purely for their comic value, since '"she" is not real at all.

"She" must be given shape by a man, and everyone knows that'.[1] Therefore, a man dressed as a woman, clumsily trying to replicate female behaviour, is the ultimate jest shared between male playwright and male audience. The spectators are thus invited to see through the female costume to the metaphorical *phallos*. By contrast, Cohen's view of the female figures in Aristophanes understands them as existing somewhere between 'woman as men think she should be, woman as men fear she is, and the mothers, maidens, wives and widows of everyday existence'.[2] While Taaffe thinks that the joke is at the expense of women, Cohen suggests that it is the *male* audience's presuppositions that are the implicit target of some of the gender humour in the plays: 'It bears repeating that Aristophanes' dramas are not an unthinking product of male ideologies but rather a conscious manipulation and satire of them' (Cohen, p.166).

The fact that the female parts would have been played by male actors complicates this study, and indeed, it would have been fascinating to spend more time considering the implications of men playing women on stage. For example, it is interesting to speculate whether the actors altered the pitch of their voices to portray women more accurately. Such questions of a more technical nature, however, have to be left aside. Granted that the female figures in the three plays would have been played by male actors, the debate focuses, rather, on the quality of theatrical construction or stage-representation of the female parts.[3] In other words, I am interested in exploring

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[1]Lauren K. Taaffe, *Aristophanes and Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p.139.

[2]David Cohen, *Law, Sexuality, and Society: The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.138.

[3]I follow Henderson in assuming that all characters in comedy, even the nude female figure of 'Reconciliation', would have been a male actor with padding. For the arguments on this issue, see Jeffrey Henderson, '*Lysistrate*: The Play and its Themes', in *Aristophanes: Essays in Interpretation*, ed. by Jeffrey Henderson, *YCIS*, 26 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp.153-218 (pp.163-64). See also Cedric H. Whitman, *Aristophanes and the Comic Hero* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), p.112 (n.31), and Bella Zweig who summarizes the debate in 'The Mute Nude Female Characters in Aristophanes' Plays', in *Pornography and Representation in Greece and Rome*, ed. by Amy Richlin (New York and Oxford:

whether Aristophanes portrays his women simply as men in drag and thoroughly unrealistic as female characters, or whether he attempts to recreate figures of women on stage who would have been readily accepted as female characters, even if they do harbour some stereotypical qualities.

New light can be shed on this debate by considering in close textual detail the language of the female characters. I argue that, in Aristophanes' three plays featuring female groups there are certain styles of speech or vocabulary which have a sex-preferential tendency, that is, they are used considerably more by one stage-sex than the other. This suggests that an attempt was made by the playwright to differentiate quite distinctly between his female and male characters, by allocating them consistently different styles of speech. The identification of a mode of discourse used by Aristophanes for his female characters is highly significant in terms of the above debate. For Taaffe's argument, that it is possible to see consistently the male construction and portrayal of the female behind the character, is challenged by the identification of a separate female discourse in the plays. Whether this separate female discourse is intended to recreate real women or the stereotypes of women is rather ambiguous. In general terms, the language of both sexes in Aristophanes may be far from everyday conversation. The belief in scholarship that Aristophanic comedy as a genre offers us the closest approximation to the conversational style of everyday Attic Greek has been finally and convincingly dispelled.[4] But it is still worth investigating whether there exists a separate female discourse in Aristophanes, even if it only perpetuates the common 'folk-linguistic' perception, that women are notoriously

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Oxford University Press, 1992), pp.73-89 (pp.78-80).

[4]Eleanor Dickey must be credited with leading the field now in the study of ancient conversational language and forms of address (see also n.23). In her comparative research on Aristophanes and Menander which seeks to ascertain which playwright represented language closer to everyday conversational Attic, Menander is found to be more similar to prose-writers and everyday language, while Aristophanes is closer to tragedy and therefore not a good model for conversational Attic. See Eleanor Dickey, 'Forms of Address and Conversational Language in Aristophanes and Menander', *Mnemosyne*, 48 (1995), 257-71 (pp.261, 269-71)

garrulous creatures, whose only conversational interest is trivia.[5]

I propose, however, that the gendered speech of the female characters - whether aiming at stereotype or authenticity - articulates something of much greater significance. To be precise, what can be identified often in the female discourse is a perceived non-hierarchical and non-combative style which has important implications in all three plays. It turns out to be precisely this kind of discourse which may benefit the *polis* if adopted by men in their inter- and intra-state political negotiations.[6] As we shall see, however, the two alternatives outlined by Taaffe and Cohen are by no means mutually exclusive. A comic female stereotype and a more serious reflection on gender differences can, and often do, become inextricably bound together in Aristophanic comedy.[7]

Aristophanes and plays about the female group

Before turning to the evidence from the three texts, it is important to set the investigation in the broader context of Aristophanes' oeuvre and note his obvious interest in plays featuring female characters, as there are numerous fragments of, and

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[5]In Spanish, this same 'folk-linguistic' perception is rendered by the phrase: "Men speak; women chat [hablar:platicar]". For this and many similar cross-cultural examples of this sentiment, see Majorie Swacker, 'The Sex of the Speaker as a Sociolinguistic Variable', in *Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance,* ed. by Barrie Thorne and Nancy Henley (Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, 1975), pp.76-83 (p.76).

[6]See Chapter 4 for details of social identity theorists who credit women with a different way of forming their social identities which can be described as 'communal', rather than 'agentic'. A woman's social identity is thought by some not to come about quite so much through the same comparative and competitive means as a man's (pp.215-16).

[7]For the way Aristophanes combines the humorous (*γελοῖον*) and serious (*σπουδαῖον*), see *Frogs* (391-92). This aspect of his comic style is commonly stressed by critics, who say he is 'funny [...] and [...] serious at the same time', see G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (London: Duckworth, 1972) p.357, and W. G. Forrest, 'The Stage and Politics', in *Greek Tragedy and its Legacy: Essays Presented to D. J. Conacher,* ed. by Martin Cropp, Elaine Fantham, S. E. Scully (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1986), pp.229-39 (p.231).

references to, many other unpreserved plays featuring the female group in the title role.

Apart from the three extant plays featuring groups of women (*Lysistrata* 411 BC, *Thesmophoriazusae* 411 BC, and *Ecclesiazusae* 392/391 BC), we know of several other plays both by Aristophanes and other comic playwrights featuring female characters in key roles.[8] By Aristophanes, we have a *Θεσμοφοριάζουσαι β'* (frs 331-58) dated to sometime after 411 BC and before 405 BC.[9] Henderson assumes that it was not a reworking of the earlier play, but a sequel or a completely new play (pp.197-99). There is also a *Lemnian Women* (*Λήμνιαι*, frs 372-91) which is thought to date after 410 BC because of a reference to Euripides' *Iphigenia at Aulis* (pp.199-200). *Women Claiming Tent Sites* (*Σκηνὰς καταλαμβάνουσαι*, frs 487-503) cannot be securely dated but is assumed to allude to a competition between men and women to erect temporary shelters at some kind of festival (pp.201-02). *The Phoenician Women* (*Φοίνισσαι*, frs 570-76) was possibly a comic version of Euripides' play of that name and produced between 412 and 408 BC (p.202). Henderson does not mention a play entitled *Danaids* (*Δαναΐδες*, frs 256-76) which was written circa 420 BC, but its name certainly suggests that the focus was again on a group of strong-willed women.

The theme of the female group was clearly a popular one with Aristophanes. But there is also evidence to suggest that other comic playwrights featured female figures on stage in important roles at the time when Aristophanes was writing.[10] The

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[8]For a closer analysis of these fragments, see A. Kassel and C. Austin (eds), *Poetae Comici Graeci,* vol. 3.2: *Aristophanes: Testimonia et Fragmenta* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984); Theodor Kock (ed.), *Comicorum Atticorum Fragmenta* (Leiden: Teubner, 1880-88); Jeffrey Henderson (ed.), *Three Plays by Aristophanes: Staging Women* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), pp.193-204; and Taaffe (n.1), pp.163-64.

[9]The following page references in this paragraph refer to Henderson (n.8) and the fragment numbers here refer to Kassel and Austin (n.8).

[10]Details are drawn here from Taaffe (n.1), pp.163-64, (nos 5 and 6); for references to volumes and fragments see Kassel and Austin (n.8), vols 2, 4, 5, and 7.

following significant titles have been preserved: Cratinus's *Thracian Women* - *Θρᾷττται* - (442 BC) (vol.4, frs 73-89) and *Delian Maidens* - *Δηλιάδες* - (424 BC) (vol.4, frs 24-37); Pherecrates' *Old Women* - *Γραῆες* (date unknown) (vol.7, frs 37-42) and *The Kitchen* or *The All-night Festival* - *Ἰπνὸς ἢ Παννυχίς* (413 BC) (vol.7, frs 64-72) which may have used the theme of a night celebration, of the orgiastic variety which Lysistrata mentions as a favourite amongst women (*Lys.* 1-4). Eupolis' *Cities* - *Πόλεις* - (422 BC) (vol.5, frs 218-58) seems to have had a chorus of women who represented the cities in the title which were to be allegorically 'married' in alliance with Athens. Pherecrates also wrote a play (possibly called *Sovereignty* - *Τυραννίς*) most probably sometime after Aristophanes' *Lysistrata,* as there are signs of influence from *Lysistrata* in it: the women are described as 'saviours of the city' (cf. *Lys.* 29-30).[11] Theopompus, sometime between 410 and 404 BC, wrote a *Women in the Army* - *Στρατιώτιδες* - (vol.7, frs 55-59); Philyllius wrote another *Πόλεις* (circa 411 BC) (vol.7, frs 9-16); Strattis wrote a *Φοίνισσαι* (409 BC) (vol.7, frs 46-53); Cephisodorus wrote an *Amazons* - *Ἀμαζόνες* - (404 BC) (vol.4, frs 1-2); and Nicochares wrote a *Λήμνιαι* (393 BC) (vol.7, frs 14-17). And there are yet other significant titles suggesting a female interest in comic plays, including a *Danaids* and a *Lēmniai* by Diphilus, a playwright of New comedy (respectively vol.5, fr.24, p.63, and vol.5, frs 53-54, p.82); and a *Lēmniai* by Antiphanes of Middle comedy (vol.2, frs 142-43, pp.388-89).

From such minimal information it is very difficult to draw any firm conclusions, yet the *topos* of the female group, over and above the well-known *topos* of such transgressive female groups in myth, as the Lemnians, Danaids and Amazons, appears to have been popular with Aristophanes and other playwrights of Old comedy at the time. Taaffe maintains that this interest indicates a high comic value attached to female characters in the metatheatrical joke between male audience and playwright. While this kind of interpretation can never be completely discredited, the frequent presence of

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[11]This fragment is put into the *Incertae Fragmenta* of Pherecrates in Kassel and Austin, *PCG* 7, fr.200, p.200 and in *CAF* 1, fr.187, p.200.

female characters on stage suggests to me that they functioned quite usefully as the 'Other' to the male audience and as the site for male reflection on the self.[12] It is this aspect of their creation, their stylization as different from the male audience and other male characters on stage, that will be investigated here.

The sociolinguistic debate on language and sex

The second important context for the discussion of Aristophanes and a gendered language in his plays is that of the history of the sociolinguistic debate about the perceived differences in the linguistic performance of the sexes. Contemporary debates in sociolinguistics draw on and react to a rich heritage of folk-linguistic speculation about language which dates back to the fourteenth century. The first quasi-scientific investigation of differences in the language of the sexes by Otto Jespersen in 1922, however, perpetuated the folk stereotypes, and these return repeatedly in contemporary language and gender studies. For instance, one such stereotype apparently scientifically proved by Jespersen is that women talk incessantly and men are relatively taciturn.[13] Feminist language critique has accepted that the irrepressible stereotypes of female-chat versus male-speak, especially the most deep-seated idea that men relate competitively in conversation whilst women use more cooperative strategies, are in themselves worth investigation. And much research has focused on

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[12]Two assumptions need to be clarified here. First, I agree with Goldhill rather than Henderson in the debate concerning attendance of women at the theatre in Athens; namely, they were probably not present. See Chapter 2, n.3 for the two contrasting positions and bibliographic references. Second, I adopt the use of the term 'Other' in a theatrical context as it has been absorbed into literary critical discourse from its broader philosophical origins (see the Introduction, n.17), by such critics as Froma I. Zeitlin in *Playing the Other: Gender and Society in Classical Greek Literature* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1996), pp.341-74 (pp.346-47, 363).

[13]Otto Jespersen, *Language: Its Nature, Development and Origins* (Leiden: Allen and Unwin, 1922), pp.237-54.

reinterpreting what these common stereotypes may mean.[14]

There are, however, many different schools of thought in sociolinguistics on the issue of sex/gender and language, and there have been several radical developments in scientific technique since the early seventies when feminist scholarship first explored the field. Since then, many controversial disagreements have continued about the interpretation of differences in the way men and women speak. Two of the dominant trends in the field of language and gender studies are called the 'dominance' and the 'difference' theories.

In the account offered by Lakoff and others as the 'dominance theory', women's language is inadequate because of cultural influence.[15] Because woman is excluded from the political and cultural power-bases, she does not develop the dominant male language, and has no vocabulary to describe her experiences. Her language is full of non-assertive utterances reflecting a woman's relative powerlessness in society, which is interpreted in the stereotype of a woman's more cooperative style. Allied to this approach is the theory adopted by some that culture has played a role in determining differences in speech between the sexes but this need not be as divisive as Lakoff suggests. The socialization of children by parents and the participation of girls and boys in gender-specific subcultures create and maintain distinct male and female styles of interaction.[16]

The second major school of thought; the 'difference approach,' reinterprets women's difference in language as an authentic manifestation of a separate female

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[14]See Thorne and Henley (n.5); Deborah Cameron (ed.), *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990); and Jenny Cheshire and Peter Trudgill (eds), *The Sociolinguistics Reader,* II: *Gender and Discourse* (London: Arnold, 1998).

[15]Robin Lakoff, 'Language and Woman's Place', *Language and Society,* 2 (1973), 45-80 (repr. as Robin Lakoff, *Language and Woman's Place* (New York: HarperTorch, 1989)), and Dale Spender, *Man Made Language*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985).

[16]Jennifer Coates, *Women, Men and Language: A Sociolinguistic Account of Gender Differences in Language,* 2nd edn (London and New York: Longman, 1993).

culture, with theorists coining expressions to describe an innately female mode of discourse, such as Luce Irigaray's 'parler-femme' (and, to a degree which is considered less essentialist, i.e. less *innately* female, the notion of 'écriture féminine' developed by Hélène Cixous).[17] The theory of difference is supported also by some scientific research, but it finds its greatest proponents by far in the popular press, with such writers as Deborah Tannen focusing on common sorts of miscommunication between the sexes.[18]

A recent group of researchers, led by Jennifer Coates, has highlighted the importance of redirecting research from mixed-sex interaction to same-sex interaction. This would allow women's and men's discourse to be investigated outside a dominance framework. In her view, this would result in an appreciation that the 'women's language' said to be typical of mixed interaction is very different from the 'women's

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[17] On Irigaray, see especially *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977); translated as *This Sex Which is Not One,* by Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985); and Margaret Whitford (ed.), *The Irigaray Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). For Cixous, see Susan Sellers (ed.), *The Hélène Cixous Reader* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

[18]For scientific study claiming tentatively to find sex differences in the brain which may have an effect on linguistic abilities, see, for example, Walter F. McKeever, 'Cerebral Organization and Sex: Interesting but Complex', and David W. Shucard, Janet L. Shucard, and David G. Thomas, 'Sex Differences in the Patterns of Scalp-Recorded Electrophysiological Activity in Infancy: Possible Implications for Language Development', in *Language, Gender and Sex in Comparative Perspective,* ed. by Susan U. Philips, Susan Steele and Christine Tanz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp.268-77 and pp.278-95 respectively. For a more populist overview which draws on various scientific studies which attempt to demonstrate that structural sex differences in the brain and hormones are the key to understanding sex differences in behaviour including language ability, see Anne and Bill Moir, *Why Men Don't Iron: The Real Science of Gender Studies* (London: HarperCollins, 1998). For works in the popular press which describe differences in language as fixed rigidly down the sex divide, see John Gray, *Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus: A Practical Guide For Improving Communication and Getting What You Want in Your Relationships* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992), and Deborah Tannen, *'You Just Don't Understand': Women and Men in Conversation* (New York: Morrow, 1990) and *Gender and Discourse* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

language' which characterizes exclusively female discourse.[19]

Further developments in language and gender studies maintain that we still lack the conclusive data which show beyond a doubt that women speak in a different way from men.[20] Conversation is too highly contextualized, with many other factors to be taken into account, such as the age, and class of the speakers, the relationship between speakers, what the goal of the discourse is, whether the speakers like each other etc. It is too rash, then, to draw conclusions from so simple a variable as the sex of the speaker. Language is better analysed by the visual metaphor of the intersecting circles of gender, race and class which illustrates that gender does not work independently of other aspects of social identity and relations.[21] In yet further developments rooted in Postmodernism, some linguists have begun to theorize that gender itself is not a given, but is accomplished through talk and constantly created and recreated in social interaction with others. The long-standing understanding that people speak in certain ways because of who they are, is challenged here by the hypothesis that people are who they are because of (amongst other things) the way they speak.[22]

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[19]The early work on this topic - Deborah Jones, 'Gossip: Notes on Women's Oral Culture', in *The Voices and Words of Women and Men*, ed. by Cheris Kramarae (Oxford: Pergamon, 1980), pp.193-98 - has been acknowledged and developed by Jennifer Coates, 'Gossip Revisited: Language in All-Female Groups', in *Language and Gender: A Reader*, ed. by Jennifer Coates (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp.226-53 (p.226). See in the same volume, Fern L. Johnson and Elizabeth J. Aries, 'The Talk of Women Friends', pp.215-25, and Jane Pilkington, '"Don't Try and Make Out That I'm Nice!": The Different Strategies Women and Men Use When Gossiping', pp.254-69. See also Jennifer Coates and Deborah Cameron (eds), *Women in Their Speech Communities: New Perspectives on Language and Sex* (London and New York: Longman, 1989) and Jennifer Coates, *Women Talk: Conversation Between Women Friends* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

[20]Deborah Cameron, *Feminism and Linguistic Theory* (London: Macmillan, 1985), p.41.

[21]Janet M. Bing and Victoria L. Bergvall, 'The Question of Questions: Beyond Binary Thinking', in Coates, 1988 (n.19), pp.295-310 (p.306).

[22]Deborah Cameron, 'Performing Gender Identity: Young Men's Talk and the Construction of Heterosexual Masculinity', in Coates, 1988 (n.19), pp.270-84 (p.272).

The only common thread running through the great controversy and disagreement in the area of language and sex studies, is a recognition that the stereotypes of male and female language have proved for centuries relatively universal and fixed.

On Aristophanes' stage, we cannot hope to analyse any authentic voices of women, as in the above sociolinguistic studies, for two obvious reasons. First, we are concerned with the medium of the theatre which, by definition, is a distortion of everyday life, and we must be cautious of all theatrical discourse, especially that of comedy. Second, the language spoken by the male actors representing women on stage was the creation of a male playwright and reflected his understanding of how women spoke. These two reasons mean that it is ultimately impossible here to uncover an authentic style of discourse which could have belonged to women in the fifth century.

Nevertheless, it is possible for us to sketch the ways in which Aristophanes' female characters were attributed with a language clearly different from his male characters. In order for the characters to have been accepted by the audience as representing the sex which they were intended to represent, there must have been some attempt to recreate a speech style which would have been recognized as female. And we find that the theme of women talking collaboratively whilst men talk competitively is upheld in Aristophanes too. The collaborative nature of women as depicted by Aristophanes, whether representing stereotype or reality, is conveyed as something positive in all three plays. Thus the first examples of positive images of female group interaction are found in the most unlikely place of Old comedy.

This approach is also adopted in discourse analysis, which credits language with the ability to actively create perceptions or characteristics, as was seen in Chapter 1 concerning the construction of such negative female groups in mythic discourse as the Amazons. See Jonathan Potter, Peter Stringer and Margaret Wetherell, *Social Text and Contexts: Literature and Social Psychology* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984); Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell, *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour* (London: Sage, 1987); and Sue Wilkinson and Celia Kitzinger (eds), *Feminism and Discourse: Psychological Perspectives* (London: Sage, 1995).

The following analysis is divided into three sections, each of which focus primarily on one of the three plays: *Lysistrata, Thesmophoriazusae,* and *Ecclesiazusae*. Each play is used to exemplify a major point in the study. *Lysistrata* gives us good examples of Aristophanes' perception of women talking amongst women. Their language demonstrates a kind of non-hierarchical manner in contrast to the men's discourse in the play. This is a tendency which also unites all three plays. *Thesmophoriazusae* highlights the linguistic changes needed to be incorporated into a male character's language to achieve mimicry of a female. *Ecclesiazusae*, on the other hand, demonstrates the adaptations which female characters are forced to make to appear as men. It should be noted that it is not possible here to analyse the plays exhaustively. Rather, key sections from each play are described in detail which illustrate examples of the importance of a gendered language in Aristophanes.[23]

Women talking with women: *Lysistrata*[24]

The differences between men's and women's worlds, reflected in the differences in their

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[23]It is important to acknowledge here the early work of Michael E. Gilleland, who called for further research into the difference in language use between the sexes in ancient Greece when he compiled a significant collection of statements by ancient authors, including Herodotus and Plato, concerning the marked difference in female speech. See especially the passage in Plato about the conservatism of women's speech (Pl. *Cra.* 418b-c) in 'Female Speech in Greek and Latin', *AJPh,* 101 (1980), 180-83. Also of note are the following contributions to the debate: David Bain, 'Female Speech in Menander', *Antichthon,* 18 (1984), 24-42; Laura K. McClure, 'Female Speech and Characterization in Euripides', in *Lo Spettacolo delle voci: Parte Seconda,* ed. by Francesco De Martino and Alan H. Sommerstein (Bari: Levante, 1995), pp.35-60; Alan H. Sommerstein, 'The Language of Athenian Women', in Martino and Sommerstein above, pp.61-85; Eleanor Dickey, *Greek Forms of Address: From Herodotus to Lucian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996); and Dickey (n.4).

[24]I have primarily relied on two concordances for the following assertions of the frequency of certain phrases in Aristophanes' extant works: Henry Dunbar, *A Complete Concordance to the Comedies and Fragments of Aristophanes,* revised and enlarged by Benedetto Marzullo (Hildesheim and New York: Olms, 1973) and the database *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG),* developed by Theodore Brunner, University of Irvine, California.

language, are no better exemplified than in *Lysistrata*. Aristophanes may indeed have incorporated certain expressions and tendencies into the language of his female characters to caricature women and exaggerate their style of speech, but, in this respect at least, he attempts to depict a separate linguistic repertoire for women. Indeed, in the context of *Lysistrata* especially, Aristophanes capitalizes on woman's perceived lack of aggression, marginality to political affairs, and ignorance of war, to portray the women as relating in an egalitarian and communal, rather than hierarchical manner. This acts as a foil for the male attitude of aggression and factionalism in the play both in inter- and intra-state relations.[25] The women's language and behaviour throughout the play demonstrate the kind of support and egalitarian spirit which is needed amongst men in times of war. Women are thus shown to relate in a different way from men, and in a style which can be used as a trope for peaceful relations amongst warring city-states.

In the first scene, when women from all over Greece gradually join Lysistrata to hear about her plan to stop the war, we find certain expressions which only female characters in Aristophanes use. This is a language style characterized by intimacy and attention to physicality. And this intimacy sets the tone for the way the women relate to each other throughout the play. For instance, the vocative ὦ τέκνον ('O my child!') is used by Calonice to Lysistrata (7). Elsewhere in Aristophanes, the use of 'child' as a vocative requires the addressee to be considerably younger than the speaker, and often it refers to the speaker's own child. It is used by Socrates and Strepsiades addressing Pheidippides in *Clouds* (1165, 1170). It is also used by Dicaeopolis to his children in *Acharnians* (891). When the woman in *Thesmophoriazusae* has had her fake child snatched by Mnesilochus as a hostage, she

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[25]See Kenneth S. Rockwell Jr. who articulates the same point in the following way: 'By turning to women [Aristophanes] was able to reject the corruption of the male world; because of their exclusion from politics, women cannot be held responsible for political or social ills. Their sudden prominence may reflect his desire, in the darker moments of the Peloponnesian War, to find a symbol for peace and fertility in women, marriage and domestic life'. See Kenneth S. Rockwell, Jr, *Politics and Persuasion in Aristophanes' 'Ecclesiasuzae'* (Leiden: Brill, 1990), p.20.

calls out to it in this way (754).

It is also used in several cases where a young female figure is being addressed in *Thesmophoriazusae* in a slightly condescending way. Both Euripides and the Scythian Archer address the dancing girl with the same word (1181, 1198), and Euripides (as Echo) addresses Mnesilochus (as Andromeda) with this title (1062). In all of these cases there is an element of persuasion or a gentle attempt to coerce at the same time as belittling the addressee, rather like the contemporary use of 'love', as in, 'How can I help you, love?'[26] The expression is not used by men to their equals as it is used by Calonice to Lysistrata. Sommerstein has already noted that this is a strange use of the word since Calonice cannot be that much older than Lysistrata, or else her part in the sex-strike with the young women would not be appropriate.[27] Lysistrata is not portrayed as being particularly young in the play, and in fact, seems to ally herself more with the older women, rather than the young more frivolous ones engaged in the sex-strike. This suggests that there was a different use of the expression, one which hinted at warmth and compassion amongst women.

Another interesting difference in the way women and men speak in Aristophanes is found in the practice of address by name. In the eleven extant plays, women address women by name freely, even when men are present. Women, however, hardly ever address men by name. Sommerstein notes that in contrast with twenty-three occasions when women address other women by name, they only address men by name on three occasions.[28] Of these three cases, one is the paratragic scenario of

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[26]For the contemporary derogatory use of this term by the male to the female, see Nessa Wolfson and Joan Manes, 'Don't "Dear" Me!', in *Women and Language in Literature and Society,* ed. by Sally McConnell-Ginet, Ruth Borker and Nelly Furman (New York: Praeger, 1980), pp.79-92.

[27]Alan H. Sommerstein (ed.), *Lysistrata* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1990), p.155, n.7.

[28]See Sommerstein (n.23), p.77. See also Alan H. Sommerstein, 'The Naming of Women in Greek and Roman Comedy', *QS,* 11 (1980), 393-418 (p.393); and Eleanor Dickey (n.23), p.246.

Andromeda (Mnesilochus) addressing Perseus (Euripides) (*Thesm.* 1134); the second is an address to Cleisthenes, a recognized effeminate (*Thesm.* 634); and the third refers to the maidservant in *Frogs* addressing Hercules by name (*Ran.* 503).

This result may not appear anomalous at first glance since men did not commonly address respectable women by name either. According to several critics, there was a rule of etiquette whereby men did not name respectable women in public (apart from women holding important religious offices), before men (who were not kin). And this rule has been shown to hold true also of Aristophanic comedy.[29] We would expect then that there was direct parity between the sexes in the matter of naming, and that men referred quite openly to other men by name.

A brief survey of naming in Aristophanes' eleven extant plays, however, demonstrates that there are statistically more occasions when women refer to women than occasions when men refer to men by name. Excluding all addresses to and from slaves, gods and abstract personifications, women address women by name on approximately twenty-five occasions in comparison with seventy-five occasions when men address men by name. The proportion of uses by women to the total uses of named addresses by women to women and men to men is thus 25%. Bearing in mind that women have only 17% of the total number of lines in the eleven plays,[30] the proportion of addresses to women from women is thus statistically greater than the addresses of men to men. Women address women by name, as expected, very much more in the three 'women plays', than in the other plays, especially *Lysistrata.* In this play, women address women by name some sixteen times and men address men only five times by name (e.g. *Lys.* 6 (x2), 9, 21, 69, 70, 78, 135, 181, 186, 189, 216, 242,

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[29]This rule was established for women in the genre of lawcourt speeches by David Schaps, 'The Woman Least Mentioned: Etiquette and Women's Names', *CQ,* 27 (1977), 323-30, and Sommerstein (n.28), pp.393-94 set out to prove that the same rule existed in Aristophanes and Menander, believing that it was probably a rule of etiquette which also applied to everyday language use in the Classical period.

[30]Sommerstein (n.23), p.72. I rely wholly on Sommerstein for the statistic that female characters have 17% of the total lines in Aristophanes.

321, 370, 746). There were clearly no inhibitions amongst women in Aristophanes about addressing each other by name. The addresses to men by men in *Lysistrata*, however, are all interestingly found in the male part of the chorus (*Lys.* 254, 259, 266, 304, 355), and mostly represent stock comic names for types (see Sommerstein (n.27), pp.167-71, nos 254, 259, 304, 355).

Dickey notes that this particular feature of women's discourse - address by name amongst free-born women - is not confined to Aristophanes, but is found in other writers including Theocritus and Herodas.[31] The discrepancy in the way men and women address members of their own sex adds to the overall picture created of women in this genre, as enjoying informal relations as a sex. Naming etiquette and the appreciation of status differences between women are thus minimalized. In male-male interaction and interaction between the sexes, however, such an informality appears to have been impossible. This different use of language may reflect, as Sommerstein maintains, the subordinate status of women in comparison with men.[32] But equally, the more informal address system between women in Aristophanes can be viewed as an attempt to portray an egalitarianism in female interaction.

Several critics have commented that such pathetic expressions as *τάλας*, *δύστηνος*, *ἄθλιος* and *τλήμων* are especially resonant of women's speech in various genres, including Euripides, Menander and Aristophanes.[33] These terms appear to be used both in self-description by women and to describe other women much more frequently than in male speech, such as in the expression, *ὦ τάλαιν' ἐγώ*. In the greater use of these terms by female characters, it is possible again to see an attempt to convey women's discourse as more characterized by emotional utterances, intimacy, and the open expression of sympathy, pathos and affection for others. This is, at least,

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[31]Dickey (n.23), p.246.

[32]Sommerstein (n.23), pp.84-85.

[33]For Euripides, see McClure (n.23), pp.45-48; for Menander and Aristophanes, see Bain (n.23), p.33; and for Aristophanes, Menander and some other poets, see Dickey (n.23), pp.161-65.

the conclusion drawn by McClure.[34]

Another example of this kind of intimate speech found only in women's discourse is the vocative ὦ φιλτάτη ('My dearest/ My darling'). Its use in any form (masculine, feminine or neuter) is found double the number of times in *Lysistrata* than in any other Aristophanic play. The vocative of the regular adjective φίλος is also used considerably more in *Lysistrata* than in any other play. The frequency of this word in the play may not be surprising since the play is concerned with lovers kept apart. But the superlative is most often used in *Lysistrata* by women to women. It acts as an intimate address not used by men to men and seems to function as a tag such as 'love' or 'dear' at the end of many sentences amongst female friends, in a way male characters do not use it.

In *Lysistrata*, in the first scene, Calonice uses the expression to Lysistrata, reassuring her that the women will come to her meeting (15). Lysistrata uses it in greeting the Spartan Lampito (78) and when she calls her 'the only true woman' for agreeing to her peace plan (145), which is admittedly also in gratitude and flattery. But in *Ecclesiazusae*, two women apologize to Praxagora for being late to her secret

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[34]McClure (n.23), pp.41, 45-48, 56. A full study would have to be carried out on these terms to test this for Aristophanes, for which there is no space here. Caution is, however, suggested, by the following example. There are many different senses even in an apparently simple expression such as τάλαν / ὦ τάλαν. This phrase is exclusively used by female characters in Aristophanes' eleven plays. And the senses certainly do not all convey a sympathetic tone. For instance, the term can convey the sense of 'wretched' meant sympathetically, but also 'obdurate' meant in a remonstrating way. For instance, Calonice calls her husband this as he has been away on campaign for five months (*Lys.* 102), indicating sympathy. But Myrrhine remonstrates with her sex-starved husband, by calling him this, when she reminds him of the impropriety of intercourse on the Acropolis (*Lys.* 910, cf. 914). The fact that this term is only used by women in Aristophanes, however, is still interesting. The two senses contained within the one word are sometimes difficult to distinguish, which suggests that the remonstrance implicit in the term is very mild indeed, verging on sympathy towards, or indulgence of, the person who is in error. The exclusive use of the term in female discourse in Aristophanes highlights the perception of free-born wives as conventionally either unable, unwilling, or not allowed to use unambiguously aggressive terms. Even in their annoyance, they retain a trace of compassion and sympathy. As we shall see, this was one marker of female characters in general in Aristophanes.

rendezvous and they both call her ὦ φιλτάτη with no apparent reason at all (37, 54). In *Plutus*, an old woman whose lover has deserted her, recounts her woes to Chremylus, after every sentence of which, is an obligatory ὦ φίλτατε (967, 1034). It certainly has other uses by women as well: it is used as a tantalizing address, as is seen when Lysistrata calls to Cinesias (853) in *Lysistrata* to arouse him even more (842-44). Myrrhine uses the same tactics in 950 to excite Cinesias whilst taking her clothes off. A female doorkeeper in *Frogs* greets Xanthias dressed up as Hercules alluringly with the same expression (*Ran.* 503).

This vocative of the superlative is used in Aristophanes by male characters, but when men use it, with one exception (*Eccl.* 378), it has the implication of flattery and persuasion, and in some cases the flattery may be in order to win over a woman.[35] For instance, in *Knights*, the chorus tries to persuade the Sausage Seller to challenge Paphlagon with ὦ φίλτατ' ἀνδρῶν (611); in *Clouds*, Strepsiades tries to persuade his lazy son to learn some sophistic tricks from Socrates with a virtually identical expression (110); and in *Thesmophoriazusae*, Mnesilochus uses it to try to cajole Euripides into not giving up all hope (210). In *Acharnians*, a farmer begs Dicaeopolis to part with a drop of his personal peace (1020); Trygaeus, in *Peace*, is delighted to see the female figure of Peace (582) and tries to coerce her into giving him a kiss with, ὦ φιλτάτη (709).[36]

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[35]The exception refers to Chremes in *Ecclesiazusae* when he exclaims 'O dearest Zeus' (378) in surprise at the number of people marked by the red-dyed rope on the morning of the Assembly.

[36]Eleanor Dickey (n.23), pp.113-21 comments on the different way Aristophanes uses φίλτατε, and other such terms she classes as 'friendship terms', from the way Plato uses them. According to her, in Aristophanes, it is used 'in genuinely affectionate or otherwise positive statements' (p.119). Whereas in Plato, the terms tend to be used by the person who is in the dominant position in a dialogue at any one time (p.117). Our findings are very similar in this respect. What Dickey classes as 'positive statements' in Aristophanes turn out to be certainly positive, in comparison with the Platonic usage. But when considered in the light of a comparison between male and female usage in Aristophanes, some usages appear also rather calculating, as the above examples show. I agree wholeheartedly with Dickey's conclusion to the section on the diversity in meaning of 'friendship terms': 'Such coexistence of different meanings of FTs is not

The theme of intimacy registered at the linguistic level in this first scene in *Lysistrata* is also shown on the physical level. Touch is an important element in this scene, and while there may be some humour at the expense of women here, positive results are certainly seen to issue from the kind of female interaction which prioritizes touch and close physical contact. The whole first scene in *Lysistrata* portrays the women like giggling adolescents. There is much physical contact between them as they scrutinize each others' bodies and comment on each others' size, shape and looks (67-68, 79-81, 83, 87-89, 92). None of the comments made have a particularly aggressive tone, but are all lighthearted.

For instance, Lysistrata suggests that Lampito is so muscular that she could throttle a bull (81), and Calonice comments on the fact that the Corinthian woman is well-endowed pointing at parts of her body (91-92). Lampito complains at being felt up like a sacrificial bull, when the women obviously start prodding her apparently impressive cleavage (83-84). But no dispute results over the matter. Most of the comments made are in metaphorical language, such as the 'plain', used to describe the fertile low-lands for which Boeotia was famous and, in this case, Ismenia's pubic region (88), and 'pennyroyal', a famous Boeotian product which is used here to describe Ismenia's neatly trimmed pubic hair (89). If the comments were intended in a more seriously hostile way, a more direct, non-metaphorical comic language would have been used, rather like the language used between the girl and the first old woman at the end of *Ecclesiazusae*, who, as rivals over the young man's affection, squabble in harsh terms (*Eccl.* 877-951, especially 918-35, 949). But unlike that scene, this scene is not a confrontational one. The women enjoy comparing themselves to each

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uncommon: English 'dear' is sometimes used when the addressee appears incompetent or childlike, sometimes expresses real affection, and sometimes (as in letters) is purely conventional' (p.121). And further, '[i]n Classical Athens, FTs could be used either in the sense of their lexical meanings to convey respect and affection, or with slightly patronizing connotations by people who felt themselves superior in a debate' (p.133). Dickey also notes the greater use of the terms φίλε and φίλτατε by women in Aristophanes, in agreement with Sommerstein (n.23), p.72, but denies that this is true of other Attic literature (p.138).

other and appear to delight in the chance to giggle about issues which they could only do between women. Their language could be described as an intimate style of discourse, which includes gestural elements and touch to convey messages.[37] Even though the women come from warring states, they are allowed by Aristophanes to interact like best friends.

It is significant that it is precisely through touch that peace is eventually brought about in the play.[38] The female half of the chorus approaches the male half to clothe it and remove a gnat from its eye; it then proceeds to wipe its tears away and kisses it (*Lys.* 1021ff). This heralds the peace between the rest of the characters on stage. The Spartan and Athenian delegates are brought to Lysistrata to conclude peace by the figure of 'Reconciliation' who uses a gentle not a rough hand on them. Lysistrata asks her to carry out the action not in the traditional manner which men adopt, which is ἀμαθῶς (boorish), but to do it like a woman, in an οἰκείως (familiar, friendly way) (1116-18). By being distracted by the physical presence of 'Reconciliation' on stage, and marking out desired territory on her naked body, the warring sides are able to make compromises with each other (1162ff). The 'corporate body' of women acting together which secures the peace, to borrow an expression

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[37]Cheris Kramarae comments on the commonly perceived way that women make considerably greater use of gestural and non-verbal language than men when speaking See *Women and Men Speaking: Frameworks for Analysis* (Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, 1981), pp.17-19. Again this kind of analysis may need to be substantiated by further investigation to save it from the status of folk wisdom. But compare also how the 'parler-femme' of Irigaray is most likely to exist in exclusively female company which is credited by her with special qualities: 'Et encore: dans ce qu'elles "osent" - faire ou dire - *quand elles sont entre elles*' (my emphasis), and 'dans ces lieux des femmes-entres-elles, quelque chose s'énonce d'un parler-femme'. See Irigaray (n.17), pp.132-33.

[38]There are other typical foibles of women which prove instrumental in bringing peace and are praised by the end of the play. Female licentiousness (*Lys.* 388) is clearly a prerequisite for the sex-strike to work, and women's over-fondness for drink has a positive lesson to teach, when the delegates at the end of the play suggest that they should always travel on embassies drunk in order to quell their natural hostility (*Lys.* 1229-35).

from Konstan, is symbolized literally on stage by the corporeal female figure of 'Reconciliation'.[39]

The women's intimacy and unity is cemented at the beginning of the play with a drink from the cup of friendship (203). Indeed, the theme of women's unity and corporate action becomes a significant one in the play. Whenever they act in unison and support each other, the women draw attention to their solidarity and mutual support (319ff, 439ff, 543ff). The women's ability to remain united is conveyed in the language of the play by the frequent use of the expression κοινῇ, which has the standard meaning in all Aristophanes' plays of 'jointly' or 'together'. This adverb appears in this form ten times in extant Aristophanes, five of which occur in this one play, sharing the same implication of the need for a whole nation or sex to unite to save Greece. The five usages outside this play vary in implication, and do not all refer to a whole nation or sex. In *Clouds*, the adverb refers to a joint action carried out by husband and wife (67). In *Lysistrata*, however, the heroine initially describes her plan

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[39]David Konstan, *Greek Comedy and Ideology* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.45-60. This chapter, '*Lysistrata*', was adapted from 'Women and the Body Politic: The Representation of Women in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*', in *Tragedy, Comedy and the Polis*, ed. by Stephen Halliwell et al. (Bari: Levante, 1993), pp.431-44. Konstan suggests that: 'The image of a female body as an emblem of Greek unity in *Lysistrata* may, then, have an analogue in the suggestion of women's sexual intimacy' (p.58). This is witnessed in the first scene of physical intimacy. Konstan cites here some modern feminist psychologists who state that women are not completely individuated, but constitutively connected to other women. 'Thus the formation of groups of women draws upon the permeability of female self-boundaries', is cited from Jane Gallop, 'The Monster in the Mirror: The Feminist Critic's Psychoanalysis', in *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, ed. by Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp.13-24 (p.16). Konstan also cites here Tania Modleski who describes a woman's essential bisexuality as being due to an unresolved attachment to the mother figure: Tania Modleski, *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* (New York and London: Methuen, 1988), pp.5-6. He concludes, '[w]hether as a result of psychological processes or for other reasons, representations of women's sexuality in Classical Greece may have lacked the asymmetrical structure of power that was characteristic of male erotic behaviour and could thus provide the model for a non-competitive and reciprocal type of bonding that could be called into service as a trope for peaceful relations among the city-states' (pp.58-59).

as the women from Athens, Boeotia and the Peloponnese coming together, and *united* saving Greece (39-41). Lysistrata uses the same word to the Magistrate again later when she describes how the women decided to band together *jointly* to save Greece (525-26). And the male and female halves of the chorus come together and claim that they will sing in unison (κοινῇ) for the rest of the play (1042).

The warring men of the play, who have come together and *jointly* submitted their disputes to Lysistrata (1111), are instructed in the benefits of keeping harmonious interstate relations, following the example of the women, when the heroine uses the same word again to describe how both the Athenians and the Spartans are *jointly* to blame for war (1129). Her method of bringing accord to Greece which she expounds in her long wool-working metaphor (574-86) would be to card the wool altogether into a basket of united goodwill (κοινὴν εὔνοιαν, 579). This long metaphor and the possible political significance it has in the play has been analysed by several critics in depth already.[40] What emerges is the idea that, in order for the city to pick itself up after its recent losses to Sparta, it should first purge itself of self-seeking factions who do not have the harmony of Greece at heart, and create a more close-knit community at Athens by enfranchising the disfranchised and non-citizens, and those who are friendly towards Athens living in the Ionic-speaking states of Asia Minor and the Aegean. Removing trouble-makers from office and developing internal unity in the Athenian empire might be seen as a step towards making external unity with Sparta. For in terms of the play, national unity might have been required at any moment, necessitated by the threat of the Persians who were 'near at hand with their barbarian army' (*Lys.* 1133).

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[40]For general comments on the political implications of the play, see Hans-Joachim Newiger, 'War and Peace in the Comedy of Aristophanes', in Henderson (n.3), pp.219-37 (pp.228-36). For more specific study of the metaphor and its political significance, see Sommerstein (n.27), pp.183-84; Carroll Moulton, *Aristophanic Poetry* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1981), pp.52-58; William Meredith Hugill, *Panhellenism in Aristophanes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936), pp.39-102; and Douglas M. MacDowell, *Aristophanes and Athens: An Introduction to the Plays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp.236-39.

It is not necessary to decide whether we should understand Lysistrata's words as conveying Aristophanes' own political ideas. What we can conclude, however, in the terms of the play, is that, if men acted more communally, more in the way that the women have related during the play, they would achieve a sustainable peace.[41] The women's world of the *oikos* is used to exemplify good practice, in such examples as the wool-working metaphor, and the reminder to the warring states that at the Olympian and Pythian games, men act like members of one family (1130).[42]

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[41]It is instructive to consider how Aristophanes depicts his male characters interacting as a contrast with his female characters. A small but useful example is the way that the male characters relate in the play *Peace*, in a similar pan-hellenic attempt to work together and restore peace to Greece. Trygaeus calls on the men of Greece, just as Lysistrata had relied on women from all over Greece, and he describes his body of helpers as an equally eclectic mix in terms of age and social status as the women in *Lysistrata* (cf. *Pax* 292-98 and *Lys.* 456-58). The men in *Peace* work together to heave the female figure of 'Peace' from a dungeon, but from 383f, the '*Παναλληνες*' (302) begin to fall out, as racial splintering starts, with each nation accusing the next of slackening off in their effort, and noting that not much is being achieved (464-66, 469, 472, 475-77, 481, 484-85, 491-93). It is assumed, eventually, that there must be some traitors to the cause as little progress is made (496, 499), and in the end, the job is successfully carried out only by those called 'peasants' (508, 511), with various groups having been asked to leave (500). The corporate action of men proves less successful than that of women, as they cannot exist as a united body to carry a project through to its conclusion as the women in *Lysistrata* do. The chorus in *Peace* is generally far from straight-forward, however, and there is a discussion of the ambiguities of this section of *Peace* and the fluctuating nature of the chorus membership in *Peace,* ed. by Alan H. Sommerstein (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1985), xviii-xix. Sommerstein cites here other critics who have investigated this particular problem. It is also useful to compare the antagonistic suspicious dialogue between Cinesias and the Spartan herald in *Lysistrata* (see especially 983, 985, 988-90), and the tense rivalries and competition between the Spartan and Athenian delegates continued at the end of the play, even when peace is in sight (1165, 1171). These scenes contrast strongly in tone with the female interaction. There is only one note of suspicion in the panhellenic female negotiations, when Lysistrata asks Lampito to leave hostages behind (243-44). But there is no further comment on this in the text, and it does not seem to cause any dissension amongst the women.

[42]See Moulton (n.40), pp.55-56, 73 on the careful juxtaposing of domestic and political imagery in the play, and the importance of the wool metaphor which acts as a centre piece for many other positive allusions to the female skill of weaving and wool throughout the play (pp.56-57).

In *Lysistrata*, as in the other two plays, women are initially seen as a threat because of their corporate identity. They are gradually recognized, however, as bringing a beneficial paradigm from the *oikos*. Their lesson is one of relating amicably. And it is this lesson which may prove to be of central importance to the warring male cities. The women's comic foibles which are the butt of the humour, turn out to be beneficial to the *polis* in each play.

The threat of women banding together had evoked fearful images for the men in *Lysistrata*. Cinesias imagined a conspiracy (1007) and the male chorus imagined a dictatorship (619, 630). The idea of women capturing the Acropolis is reminiscent of another band of marauding women: the Amazons, who, in mythic tradition, attempted to capture the Acropolis (678).[43] But it is *precisely* women functioning as a unified body here, that achieves peace for the whole of Greece. The women had no intention of indefinitely taking over the running of the city, but they just wanted to teach the men better practice.[44]

In *Thesmophoriazusae,* we find a similar suggestion as in *Lysistrata.* The women here also style themselves as a corporate body: the *dēmos* of women (*Thesm.* 306-07, 335-36). The fear of such a corporate identity is clear from the start when Euripides conceptualizes the women as a secret band scheming against him to put him to death (82). The dispute between Euripides and the women, however, ends amicably. In the *parabasis,* the chorus leader speaks of a much maligned creature: woman. The chorus-leader maintains that women do not to steal from the public funds, like men

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[43]It is a great irony in the play, however, that it is the men that intend to start the 'Lemnian' fire and propose the unconstitutional act of condemning all the women with one vote (270). It is also the men who storm the Acropolis with fire brands and crowbars (306-11, 428-50) in the manner of invading Amazons. See Richard P. Martin, 'Fire on the Mountain: *Lysistrata* and the Lemnian Women', *Cl Ant,* 6 (1987), 77-105.

[44]It is not only the characters in the play who see the threatening aspect of the women's group action. A more recent critic, Daniel Levine, has catalogued quite detailed structural parallels between the comedy *Lysistrata* and the tragedy *Bacchae* in '*Lysistrata* and *Bacchae*: Structure, Genre, and "Women On Top"', *Helios,* 14 (1987), 29-38.

(811), and they always return everything they borrow (813). Men are more likely than women to be the gluttons, petty-thieves, and kidnappers in society, while women preserve the old traditions and feminine possessions in the *oikos* without selling anything off for profit as men do (819-29). Women and men act differently and women have some qualities amidst all their comic foibles, which could be adopted by men to benefit Athens.

The disastrous progression of the war and the workings of the democracy in 411 BC had led to a spirit of distrust and disillusionment at Athens. Factionalism and egotism amongst the politicians of the time was rife, as were assassinations (Thuc. 8.65-66). This situation culminated in the revolution in the summer of 411 BC in which the democracy was overthrown and replaced by an even more problematic oligarchy (the Four Hundred). I propose that the destructive individualism and selfish attitude amongst his contemporaries was on Aristophanes' mind in the early part of 411 BC when he wrote these two plays. Because of these circumstances, it is likely that the playwright sought to offset this aggression by depicting a different way of relating. And he chose women to exemplify this.

In *Ecclesiazusae,* we see again similar male fears as in the other two plays when the women act as a corporate body against the men's political ineptitude. The women hatch a plan at the women-only Skira festival (*Eccl.* 17-18) and meet secretly at dawn to infiltrate the Assembly. For the men, this does not bode well. They fear some revolution (338). The result, however, is one of real benefit to the *polis*. The women will adopt a campaign, as Praxagora relates, of knocking all the individual houses down and creating one large *oikos* (*οἴκησις* (674)) for everyone. The men are to live in the lap of luxury, while the women look after them. The same implications seem to be present here as in *Lysistrata.* There, as here, factionalism and egotism must end in order to make way for a new kind of solidarity and unselfishness, as exemplified by women, bringing more egalitarian and communitarian skills from the

oikos.[45] There must be no more seeking private gain while drawing pay from public funds (206-07), and no more informing (561).[46]

The kind of antagonistic behaviour mentioned above is both described and exemplified by the male characters in the play. Blepyrus and Chremes admit how women, unlike men, do not betray secrets (442-44). They lend each other things and do not need witnesses to secure the safe return of the items, unlike men, who are always cheating each other (446-51).[47] This lack of trust, hostility and self-seeking individualism are all characteristics of men which seem to have brought the city into a bad state, ruining any sense of civic spirit. The remedy implicitly suggested by this image once again is the adoption of more feminine qualities sprung from the *oikos*,

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[45]See Rothwell (n.25), pp.20-21, who describes in detail the gradual transformation of the polis into a huge *oikos*.

[46]Saïd, Sommerstein, Foley and Rothwell all understand the force of the play to reside primarily in an acute satire of the greedy, individualistic attitudes of the Athenian *dēmos*. A different more inclusive way of relating is offered by adopting the style of women and the private realm. See Suzanne Saïd, '*The Assemblywomen*: Women, Economy, and Politics', in *Oxford Readings in Aristophanes*, ed. by Erich Segal (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp.282-313 (pp.301-04). First published as '*L'Assemblée des femmes*: les femmes, l'économie et la politique', in *Aristophane, les femmes et la cité*, Les Cahiers de Fontenay, 17 (Fontenay-aux-Roses: École Normale Supérieure, 1979), pp.33-69; Helene P. Foley, 'The "Female Intruder" Reconsidered: Women in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* and *Ecclesiazusae*', *CPh*, 77 (1982), 1-21 (pp.19-21); Rothwell (n.25), pp.10-11; and A. H. Sommerstein 'Aristophanes and the Demon Poverty', in Segal, above, pp.252-81 (pp.277-79).

[47]It is also possible to witness such male antagonistic relations when two men argue with each other using violent and abusive language (*Eccl.* 765, 793, 803). The scene between them represents perfectly the selfish behaviour of the male citizens, which has already been described by Blepyrus, and is reinforced here by the men (774-83). One does not trust the other to help him with his goods, as he suspects he will deceive him and claim them as his own later (869-71). The second man does, in fact, scheme to exploit the current state of communism for as much as he can get whilst retaining his own goods (872-76). This does not represent, of course, the only way in which men relate in Aristophanes, nor is all-male interaction by default antagonistic (327ff). But there is clearly a certain stylization in these gendered scenes which highlights tendencies in exclusively female interaction in contrast with exclusively male interaction.

which are quite the opposite of qualities used in the public world of men.[48]

Even though *Ecclesiazusae* came out over twenty years later than *Lysistrata*, there are some similar political implications. In this play, as in the former, there may be disillusionment that Athens had got involved in hostilities with Sparta again (the Corinthian War), and a sense that the democracy running Athens was full of men who intended to benefit themselves as much as they could, irrespective of the cost to the city.

In all three plays, the 'domestic way' championed by the women is used as a different paradigm of behaviour. How seriously Aristophanes intended his example to be taken is a separate issue. What is striking in these plays is that, although women are laughed at, nevertheless, they are also given some credit for being exponents of peaceful relations.

Men playing women: *Thesmophoriazusae*

To identify differences in speech given to male and female characters, it is useful to look at occasions when characters are instructed on how to change their gender identity and consciously adopt the manners and speech of the opposite sex. There are several examples of male characters trying to appear to be women in Aristophanes and vice versa. One of the best examples for consideration is in *Thesmophoriazusae,* when a man, Euripides' relative, Mnesilochus, adopts a female style and speech in order to infiltrate a women-only festival. The play concentrates on the importance of maintaining the correct gendered language, which Mnesilochus cannot ultimately do. The fact that his ruse is discovered by a linguistic slip underlines the importance in this

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[48]There is no need to engage in the debate here concerning the scene of the three lascivious old women and the young man in the second half of the play. In terms of the argument above, not *all* women act in an unselfish, cooperative way (*Eccl.* 884, 934-35, 1043-44). But they do not need to for the argument about the *perception* of a certain kind of communal female behaviour to remain a persuasive, indeed pervasive, image in Aristophanic comedy. For an unusually positive understanding of the three old women, and their overall function in the play, see A. H. Sommerstein (n.46), pp.261-64, 278-79. See also Henderson (n.8), p.150.

play of gender identity and the different linguistic and behavioural styles which - whether they are genuine or comic exaggerations - are seen to belong to the different sexes.

The theme of men dressing up as women, and adopting a different language and manner is highlighted at the very beginning of the play. Euripides and his relative, Mnesilochus go to see Agathon, the tragic playwright, to persuade him to infiltrate the Thesmophoria and defend Euripides who was to be condemned to death by the women. Agathon is the perfect candidate for the job according to Euripides as he is fresh-faced, fair-skinned, clean-shaven, attractive and he has a woman's voice, γυναικόφωνος (191-92). We are also led to believe that he is a notorious homosexual in Athens, who adopts the passive role in intercourse (35). We are presented on stage with Agathon dressed in women's apparel practising some lyrics for a new play, in which he takes the roles of both female chorus and female protagonist (101-29). Mnesilochus is confused at the hybrid creature before him who has just delivered such an effeminate and lascivious song (131-32). He protests that such a mixture of masculine and feminine accessories on one person defies logic (130-45). Mnesilochus becomes only a little less confused, when Agathon explains that he dresses as a woman and adopts feminine characteristics when writing about women to aid the compositional process (151-52).

After the colourful example of Agathon as woman, there is swiftly a second transformation of a man into a woman on stage: Mnesilochus. He has naïvely offered to infiltrate the Thesmophoria and make a speech in favour of his threatened relation. He is thus shaved and depilated of all extraneous body hair and dressed in female clothes for his part. In tandem with his outward physical conversion, Mnesilochus starts adopting certain linguistic and behavioural characteristics which are customarily thought to belong to women. He swears by Demeter (225), which is a typical woman's oath, when Euripides nicks him while shaving him, then later he swears by Aphrodite (254), which is an oath exclusively used by women in Aristophanes' works. This is the

only use of this oath by a male character.[49] Rather than any attempt at representation of real women, Mnesilochus disguised as a woman may be intended as a caricature of woman as a vain creature. For instance, he is concerned whether the gown falls correctly around his legs (256) in exactly the way that the deluded Pentheus is worried in *Bacchae* when he is dressed up by Dionysus in order to infiltrate a Bacchic festival (*Bacch.* 937-38). He also shows a rather fastidious concern about whether Agathon's wig and slippers fit him properly (260, 263).

In this particular episode of a man playing a woman, we have one good example of Lauren Taaffe's thesis of Aristophanes' parody of the female for comic effect, similar to such female impersonation as found, more recently, in Les Dawson's sketches. The exaggeration used in Mnesilochus's case is the exception that proves the rule of my general argument because it differs from the way in which male actors normally portrayed female characters in Aristophanes. In most other cases, by contrast, the portrayal of the female seems to lack the clearly parodic edge of the Mnesilochus case, suggesting that it is more authentic representations of women that Aristophanes commonly aimed at.[50]

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[49]See the recent work by Luis Gil devoted entirely to the use of oaths in Aristophanes: Luis Gil, 'Uso y función de los teónimos en la comedia aristofánica', in *Sociedad, política y literatura: comedia griega antigua: actas del I Congreso Internacional, Salamanca, Noviembre 1996,* ed. by Antonio López Eire (Salamanca: Logo, 1997), pp.21-29. Also Sommerstein (n.23) pp.65-67 considers the gendered use of oaths in Aristophanes and Menander.

[50]Jill Dolan, however, cites the Greek theatre as the 'seed of Western theatrical tradition', and claims that we have inherited from the Greek theatre a system in which the female is always non-existent in male drag performance. The only female shown is 'woman-as-myth, as a cultural, ideological object'. See 'Gender Impersonation Onstage: Destroying or Maintaining the Mirror of Gender Roles?', *Women and Performance,* 2 (1985), 5-11 (pp.6, 8). Lesley Ferris reiterates this sentiment when she focuses on *Thesmophoriazusae* to illustrate playwrights aesthetically misrepresenting women on stage. According to Ferris, Aristophanes' comedy tells us how easy it is to become a woman; 'a metonymic piece of skirt' (p.28), because the men who impersonate women simply adopt certain props and clothes and thus they have created woman, just as Mnesilochus is seen to do in *Thesmophoriazusae*. See *Acting Women: Images of Women in Theatre* (London: Macmillan, 1990), see especially pp.20-30. The more

The gradual process of feminization is halted abruptly when Euripides attempts to hasten Mnesilochus on his way to the festival. Startled by Euripides' haste, Mnesilochus suddenly reverts back to an oath which is overwhelmingly used by men: 'By Apollo!' (269). There are only four occasions in over fifty usages where female characters use this oath in Aristophanes. One of these is Praxagora, who adopts several other masculine forms of speech in her role as leader of a *coup d'état* (*Eccl.* 631). The second is a woman pretending to be a man in *Ecclesiazusae* who changes a common woman's oath to a man's oath (160). These two exceptions seem to prove the rule that the oath is used primarily in masculine discourse. The other two exceptions are slightly ambiguous. In *Frogs,* a maid in Hades uses this oath when she urgently petitions Xanthias dressed as Hercules to come in to dine, only to be beaten as a scoundrel for stealing food during the last time he visited (508, 549ff). In *Lysistrata*, Myrrhine uses an Apollo oath with great irony in the context of her forthcoming denial of intercourse with her husband. A more appropriate oath at this point would have been to Aphrodite (917). The fact that Myrrhine swears by Apollo, however, is a presage of her deceit, suspected by Cinesias when he notes the oath she has used, and repeats it later in anger at her prevarication (942).

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nuanced approach adopted by Ferris in a later work edited by her, however, appears more useful. Here, whilst she recognizes that the staple images of male drag performers do not usually represent everyday women, but rather, rely on grotesque caricature, she notes that there can be more serious male-dressing as women, which goes beyond simple parody. In the Introduction, she cites the contemporary example of Barry Humphries as 'Dame Edna Everage', and asks whether we always remember that there is a man behind the woman. See *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-Dressing* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp.9-11. The last three essays in the volume concern themselves directly with the question of whether cross-dressing actually undermines conventional masculine and feminine behaviour, or whether it reinscribes the binary status quo of masculinity and femininity (p.18). Ferris seems to have shifted her ground to an appreciation that cross-dressing on stage, whilst reinforcing the status quo, also contains within it a certain liminal moment; a questioning; the sense that the gender of the self is mutable (p.9). Mnesilochus dressed as a woman on stage would have presented such a liminal moment, as he continually shifted his identity between that of male and female, adopting different strategies, and sometimes confused in his identity. The issue of what qualities constitute masculinity and what different qualities constitute femininity would have been prominent.

When Euripides schools Mnesilochus on how to act the part of a woman, he reminds him that props are not all that is required, for he must also speak like a woman, if he becomes drawn into chattering (*λαλεῖν*) with the other women (*Thesm.* 267-68).[51] After the dressing scene, we have the opportunity to observe Mnesilochus attempting what he considers characteristic female speech. He enters the women's festival addressing an imaginary slave, with the typical slave name - Thratta (279ff). He repeats this name four times in a sixteen-line speech, which could either portray nervousness or mimic the perceived loquacity and chatter of women. Linguistically, he remembers to keep up the feminine endings of his participles (*λαβοῦσα* and *ἔχουσαν* 285, 288), and he also remembers that the gods connected with the Thesmophoria are Demeter and Persephone (286-87).

When he gets up to speak in the assembly-style meeting of the Thesmophoria, he speaks virtually faultlessly as a woman - in form. It is only the content of his speech - vouching for Euripides and condemning women's foibles - that alerts the women to the fact that he may be a male imposter. He keeps to all the appropriate feminine endings, e.g. *αὐτή* (469, 476), *ἐν ἀλλήλαισι* (471), *ἔχουσαι* (473), and he swears by Artemis (517), an oath exclusively used by female characters in Aristophanes' extant works. He remembers to use the passive form of the verbs meaning 'to screw' used only by women and effeminate men (488, 492, 493). It is only when he is really being tested that he makes a fatal error in vocabulary. He uses a word which refers to the chamber-pot used by men - *ἀμίς* - rather than that used by women - *σκάφιον* (633). Thus Mnesilochus could not succeed in his ruse because of an inability to master thoroughly a different discourse.

Mnesilochus continues in the second half of the play portraying female characters when scenes from Euripides' tragedies are acted out as ruses to free him from the women. The woman guarding him is surprised that he wants to mimic Helen when he has not even been punished for his first attempt at female impersonation (862-63). Mnesilochus portrays another heroine, Andromeda, but in this case his gender

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[51]The term *λαλεῖν* is discussed in detail on pp.179-80.

identity is not fixed. His shifts in grammatical gender are not coordinated with his shifts in and out of role. He moves in and out of being himself and the heroine and uses a mixture of masculine and feminine endings (1022-25 (as man), 1030-33 (as woman), 1038 (as man), 1040-41 (as woman)). Thus, in the latter half of the play, a concern with correct, or indeed, incorrect language, reminds us that the sex of the speaker was registered at a very basic level in the inflected language of Greek. Such play with inflected endings is used in *Thesmophoriazusae* as a reminder that there are still greater differences between the sexes. As we, today, are removed from the language of performance, we cannot fully appreciate the humour involved when Mnesilochus switched linguistic registers on stage. We do not know whether he may have even changed the pitch of his voice when switching back and forth between being female and male. But this, certainly, would have added to the humour of the scene. Whilst Mnesilochus's adoption of female characteristics tells us little of how women may have spoken, it certainly indicates that Aristophanes was recording a common linguistic joke - women chat; men speak.

Women playing men: *Ecclesiazusae*

The last study in this chapter focuses on female characters attempting to be male. A good example of this is the women imitating men in *Ecclesiazusae*. The difficulties which the women have in this play in copying men's speech and the continual rectifying of their mistakes is so overt that we are compelled to focus on the structural differences in their discourse, and thus, the differences between the worlds of men and women.

The play starts with Praxagora waiting for a group of women to meet with her at dawn to practise being men, so that they can carry out a *coup d'état* in the Assembly later that day. The difficulties for Praxagora begin when one of the women suggests that she will card some wool whilst the Assembly fills up (*Eccl.* 89). Another woman voices a concern common to them all: 'How can women speak in public?' (110-11). Praxagora suggests that it is young effeminate men who have been 'shafted' (*σποδοῦνται*) the most who are considered the best in the Assembly, and so,

women who are, by nature, 'the shafted', she thinks, should make excellent speakers (111-14).

The verb λαλεῖν links women with the kind of young male speakers who have been schooled in a new-style slippery rhetoric by types such as Socrates and Euripides. Effeminacy and rhetoric is linked in the use of λαλεῖν to describe the son of Cleinias, in *Acharnians* 716, who is the notorious Alcibiades: εὐρύπρωκτος καὶ λάλος (wide-arsed and loquacious). The 'wide-arsed' refers to him being a homosexual or bisexual in Aristophanes (and thus akin to women rather than men). His 'loquacious' characteristic derives from his irrepressible nature as an orator in the courts, practising from an early age. A summary of the uses of this verb in the rest of Aristophanes substantiates the link between talking in a slippery rhetorical way and being feminine.

This verb, which has the implication of prattle as opposed to serious speech - λέγειν - and related words, such as the adjective λάλος and compounds of it such as ὀξύλαλος occur fifty-six times in extant Aristophanes and its basic use conveys the idea of saying nothing of any consequence; idly chatting, as in *Acharnians* 21, where men stay in the Agora chatting rather than go to the Assembly; or *Clouds* 505, where Socrates tells Strepsiades to stop babbling and follow him.

There are three *specific* contexts, however, in which this verb is otherwise found. First, it is used to convey the idea of gossip or rumour. For example, in *Thesmophoriazusae*, Cleisthenes goes to the women to report on the rumour circulating in the Agora that a man will attempt to infiltrate the Thesmophoria (πρᾶγμα... λαλούμενον (577-78)), and in *Ecclesiazusae*, Praxagora claims that the lamp which is privy to her secret activities never 'blabs' (16).

Second, it is used to convey the talk of those schooled in clever rhetoric and those who have had a sophistic training. In *Clouds*, Just Discourse suggests that due to Unjust Discourse the baths are full of men lounging around *chattering*, while the gymnasia remain empty (1053). Or in *Frogs*, Aeschylus accuses Euripides of teaching people the art of babbling and prating (λαλιάν and στωμυλιάν (1069)). The connection with Sophism is introduced directly at 1492, where young men are accused

of gathering at the feet of Socrates to learn bad speaking habits. Euripides claims to have taught everybody how to talk - λαλεῖν - including such people as women and slaves (*Ran.* 954). This is understood by Aeschylus and Dionysus as a negative development, which has caused the wrestling schools to be emptied and all the young men to be practising skills of argumentation against their superiors (*Ran.* 1070-72).

Third, the ability to λαλεῖν is customarily attributed to women. In *Thesmophoriazusae,* the women claim that Euripides portrays them as being chatterboxes, τὰς λάλους (393). The male half of the chorus in *Lysistrata* does not intend to let the female half go on talking (356), and the Magistrate demands punishment for a woman precisely because she will not cease prattling (442). The Scythian in *Thesmophoriazusae* describes Echo as an 'accursed, chatterbox of a woman' (1097). Then again, in *Ecclesiazusae*, Praxagora asks those women who have practised talking (λαλεῖν), i.e. speaking out in the Assembly like true male orators, to put on their beards (119). The first woman, understanding the verb as describing the way *women* speak, replies, 'who of us here, O friend, does not know how to λαλεῖν?' (120).

Returning to *Ecclesiazusae*, even though the women finally understand the kind of male discourse that Praxagora requires of them, the rehearsal amongst the women for their ruse in the Assembly continues in a farcical manner, with the women finding it hard to speak convincingly as men. The first woman is confused about the garland she has to wear in order to take the floor. It brings to her mind a symposium, and she imagines that she will be handed a drink (*Eccl.* 132-33). This is surely no more than the usual Aristophanic joke that women are notorious wine-tipplers. When the second woman makes an attempt at speaking, she does a little better, only failing when she swears 'By the Twain', which is an exclusively female oath and only used by female characters in Aristophanes (*Eccl.* 155). She later corrects herself by using an oath to Apollo when she realizes her mistake. But it appears to have been useless for Praxagora to exhort the woman to adopt a different discourse by speaking out ἀνδριστὶ καὶ καλῶς ('well, like a man') (149). For the woman begins again only to stumble by saying 'O assembled women!' (165).

Praxagora takes her turn at speaking like a man, and delivers a superb speech very carefully adopting linguistically and stylistically all the necessary masculine attributes. The speech is a careful rendition of a standard Assembly speech with attention paid to logical progression through certain stages such as *prooimiom, diēgesis, prothesis, pisteis,* and *epilogos*. It is also sophisticated in its use of antithetical imagery and language.[52]

It has been remarked that both Praxagora and Lysistrata as leaders show a remarkable ability to mimic men, and thus do not seem to be credible as women.[53] On a careful study of the way the two leaders address their fellow women, it is clear that their tone is cooperative and encouraging, as we have already seen for most of the female characters in the plays, rather than dictatorial like the male leaders of the other fantasy plots in Old comedy, e.g. Pisthetaerus in *Birds* and Trygaeus in *Peace*. Both these male leaders, to different degrees, engage in a policy of exclusivity, which is in stark contrast with the theme of inclusivity adopted by Lysistrata and Praxagora. Their inclusivity is seen clearly in Lysistrata's case, by her emphasis on achieving results by taking actions 'in unison' (*Lys.* 39-41) with women from other states in Greece, and by allocating 'shared' responsibility to all involved in the war, including both the Spartans and Athenians (*Lys.* 1129). This difference in exclusive and inclusive styles becomes even more clear by a comparison of some of the male and female leadership skills displayed in the plays.

Konstan notes that, although the intention of the protagonists in *Birds* had been to find a home less contentious and competitive than Athens (44, 121-22), the end-result resembles, rather, a ruthless militaristic colonization. The main protagonists

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[52]See Charles T. Murphy, 'Aristophanes and the Art of Rhetoric', *HSPh*, 49 (1938), 69-113 (pp.109-10), who also comments, '[s]o accurate is the parody that the speech would do credit to an actual speaker in the Assembly' (p.110, n.1).

[53]Taaffe (n.1), pp.61-62. I cannot agree with Taaffe that Lysistrata is essentially a male stooge separated from the other women of the play with a language neither distinctively masculine nor feminine. See also Zweig (n.3), pp.80-81, who feels that Lysistrata undergoes a change after line 1112 in the play after which she 'plays a male role in a male way' (p.81).

create and take charge of the kingdom of the birds and seize power from Olympus, with Pisthetaerus described as ἄρχων (1123) and τύραννος (1708).[54] Euelpides becomes annoyed at the way in which Pisthetaerus suddenly starts dictating orders to him and criticizes him for his behaviour (837-49). This egotistical departure from their peaceful ideal is one characteristic of male leaders which does not feature in the plans of Lysistrata or Praxagora, who remain consistently altruistic.

Trygaeus, the male leader in *Peace*, rests somewhere between the two extremes of Lysistrata and Dicaeopolis in *Acharnians* in his dictatorial nature as a comic hero. He boasts, in a way that Lysistrata never does, about his unique position of authority and accomplishments, claiming that he deserves rich rewards from the people (865f, 918-21). In the scenes in the second half of the play in which Trygaeus rejects various petitions for peace, and negotiates with various clients selling goods, he shares characteristics with Dicaeopolis. He denies the petition of a soothsayer (1113), and a crest-maker (1221), and abuses Lamachus's son who sings bellicose songs (1288-89). But unlike Dicaeopolis, he only castigates those who are directly involved in and profiting from the fighting, and he treats liberally those who are not, such as the sickle-maker (1198-1209). Dicaeopolis, on the other hand, denies petitions to several characters simply on a selfish whim, e.g. a farmer, who had lost his oxen (*Ach.* 1035, and see the chorus's comment at 1037-39, which notes his ungenerous attitude). He denies the petition of a bridegroom, but accepts the request of a bride, as she is a woman and, what is significant in the context of my thesis here, 'not to blame for the war' (*Ach.* 1054, 1061-62).

Lysistrata has a different style from Pisthetaerus and Trygaeus as leader. She uses the kind of words of endearment to her friends that they use to her and amongst each other (*Lys.* 78, 140, 145). When the women threaten to break their oath of celibacy, Lysistrata still addresses them in a friendly way with inclusive hortatory verbs such as ἀπείπωμεν (778), and εἰσίωμεν (779). She includes herself in their crimes when she says 'it will be a disgrace, my dears, if we betray the oracle' (προδώσομεν

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[54]See David Konstan (n.39), pp.29-44 (p.30)

(780)).

There is, admittedly, a certain distinction between Praxagora and Lysistrata as leaders and the other women in their respective plays. They are more serious characters and have more intelligence. It is important to note, however, that in both cases, specific mention is made of their acquisition of a male kind of discourse to explain the incongruity of women speaking as fluently as men. Praxagora mentions that she learned by hearing the orators on the Pnyx where she had lived for a time with her husband (*Eccl.* 243-44), and Lysistrata claims to have listened attentively to her father and other older men (*Lys.* 1126-27).[55] Their special skills are accorded them because they are the heroines; the characters who have the 'bright idea' in their plays. This is a characteristic of the comic hero and ranks them with the other heroes of Aristophanes' comedies who all happen to be male.

When Praxagora finally takes her turn at making a speech, she is constantly interrupted by such incompetent remarks from her comrades as 'By Aphrodite, that's well said' (*Eccl.* 189) which is exclusively a woman's oath in Aristophanes. There is just one exception to this rule; when Mnesilochus in *Thesmophoriazusae* comments sarcastically on Agathon's feminine apparel (254). So this example, in fact, reinforces the rule of feminine usage. Later in Praxagora's speech, she is interrupted by more appropriate comments, such as 'what a wise man!' (204), and 'speak on, good sir' (213). Praxagora notes with pleasure here that the woman has used the correct formulation.

The significance of a gendered language does not cease after the women's dress-rehearsal. On the way to the real Assembly the women of the chorus draw attention to their linguistic slips and the great effort needed to maintain a language style not their own. It uses the address 'O gentlemen' (*Eccl.* 285), but then it breaks

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[55]See David M. Lewis' article for the theory that Lysistrata had a special position in the play because she was meant to evoke the priestess of Athena Polias in 411 BC whose name may have been 'Lysimache'. See 'Notes on Attic Inscriptions (II) xxiii: Who Was Lysistrata?' *ABSA*, 50 (1955), 1-12 and H. D. Westlake, 'The *Lysistrata* and the War', *Phoenix*, 34 (1980), 38-54 (especially p.52, n.47).

the spell and refers to itself with a feminine participle, μεμνημένας ('we (feminine plural) must remember to call ourselves men' (286-87)). Later the chorus says it must vote to help its female friends and then corrects itself by saying male friends (299). This language discrepancy is used to symbolize a difference in the male and female worlds which is an important theme in all three plays featuring women. Women are excluded from the public world of men and are not allowed to have an opinion on, let alone intervene in, matters of state. Lysistrata knows this only too well and describes to the Magistrate how husbands tell their wives to be silent, for after all, 'war is the concern of men' *(Lys.* 514-15, 520).

Women also attempt to act like men speaking in a quasi-Assembly set up in the *Thesmophoriazusae* which has been analysed fully by Haldane.[56] She documents all the ways in which the women parody the opening scene of a men's Assembly, such as in the phrase τίς ἀγορεύειν βούλεται; ('Who wishes to speak?' (379)).

It must be noted, however, further to Haldane's work, that when the women deliver their speeches, they are only partly successful at maintaining a professional oratorical style. The women in this play have similar problems in speech-making as the female characters in *Ecclesiazusae*. For instance, the first speaker in the *Thesmophoriazusae*, starts with the formulaic disclaimer, which Dover notes is customary in fourth-century oratory: 'It is through no ambition [...] that I rise to address you, Ladies' (*Thesm.* 383-84).[57] And she maintains the regular practice of professional orators in assuming a detached perspective by referring to her fellow women in the second person plural (386 (disputed)). But in her excitement as the speech progresses, she includes herself in her audience's grievances, referring no longer professionally to 'you', but now to 'us' and 'our' grievances (from 389 for the rest of her speech). It is only in the last line of her speech that she resumes the more

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[56]J. A. Haldane, 'A Scene in the *Thesmophoriazusae* (295-371)', *Philologus,* 109 (1965), 39-46.

[57]K. J. Dover, *Aristophanic Comedy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1972), p.163.

traditional orator's discourse: 'This is all I have to say in public; as for the rest, I will write it out as a formal motion with the assistance of the secretary' (431-32).

After the woman's speech, the chorus inadvertently deflates the speaker, proves itself no sound judge of public speaking and, at the same time, draws attention to the profound differences in female discourse and experience, which do not allow women to mimic men effectively, when it praises the second female speaker's great rhetorical skill by using the verb καταστωμυλλέσθαι to describe the way she had spoken (*Thesm.* 462-64). This verb conveys, rather, the idea of babbling on endlessly, as for instance, when Mnesilochus says to Euripides as Echo that he will be the death of him with his 'prattle' (*Thesm.* 1073).

Even though the women in *Ecclesiazusae* eventually adapt to the correct speech, as soon as they revert back to their female roles, there are changes in language which accompany their transformation back into women. For instance, before they began to play their male roles, when Praxagora asked the women to put their beards on, the first woman drew attention to how odd they looked and addressed Praxagora as ὦ γλυκυτάτη ('O sweetest Praxagora!' (124)). At the end of her speech, such discourse returns again when Praxagora is addressed in the same way (241). This superlative of address, which functions rather like the intimate superlative ὦ φιλτάτη, which has already been investigated in *Lysistrata* (pp.163-64), is used ten times in Aristophanes, five times by men and five times by women, but the male usages all fall into the category of cringing flattery and exaggeration, with diminutives often being used with the adjective.[58] For instance in *Acharnians,* Dicaeopolis tries to ingratiate himself with Euripides so that he can borrow some props: Εὐριπιδίον ὦ γλυκύτατον (475). The women use the superlative in a variety of contexts not reserving it for use in a particularly wheedling way. Lysistrata salutes Spartan Lampito

[58]My assessment of the use of this term is in agreement with Sommerstein (n.23), pp.70-71. He divides the male usage into two categories. It is used both to women for whom men feel desire, and to beg favours from men. The address to women, I suggest, could also be considered 'cringing flattery', as above, as it is a means to persuade a woman to show affection.

with it (*Lys.* 79) and the chorus describes Myrrhine in the same terms (*Lys.* 970, cf. *Eccl.* 124, 241). This is also how Myrrhine addresses her baby (*Lys.* 889-90).

Praxagora's style in *Ecclesiazusae* is also seen to revert to type when she meets her husband. She pretends to be dumb and absentminded, claiming that she is slight and weak (539) and that she forgot the Assembly was meeting (550-52). When Blepyrus says that the State has been handed over to the women, Praxagora replies: 'What for? To weave?' (556). She persists in not understanding his words, as women who have nothing to do with politics should (556), and she speaks like a stereotypically naïve wife. But quite soon afterwards she launches into a public exposition of how the women shall run the country. Her language here changes and takes on a more masculine colouring, when she refers to herself in the third person as a male speaker (589) and uses the oath 'By Apollo' (631). She is clearly adopting her role as 'female general' (*στρατηγίς* 835, 870), and lives up to the title accorded her by her slave: *ἡ κεκτημένη* (the woman who owns me), which, as one would expect, is otherwise used only in the masculine form in Aristophanes (1126). Praxagora thus draws attention to the differences in her language when she is engaged in politics, where she acts like a stereotypical man, from her language when she is excluded from politics and acts like a stereotypical woman. Aristophanes sought to show fundamental differences in his characters' language due to their gender, which, in turn, had a direct effect on their involvement in political activities. Or *mutatis mutandis*, a woman's lack of involvement in political activities could be seen to have allowed a less aggressive female discourse to develop.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have identified in Aristophanes the common folk-linguistic idea of a gendered language. It is virtually impossible to know how closely the female language in Aristophanes' women represented the language of real women. The female figures on stage do not always speak in a predictable style which we can neatly designate as 'feminine'. As Silk suggests, Aristophanes' characters are not 'realist', but 'imagist': they may move in and out of styles and sometimes say things completely at variance with

the style we had expected from them.[59] Also we need to remain constantly aware that we have been studying the text of a male playwright for male actors. The women on stage are thus only ultimately men dressed as women. But agreeing with David Cohen rather than Lauren Taaffe, I would argue that Aristophanes tried to make his female characters reasonably recognizable as women, rather than making them all caricatures for the comic pleasure of the male audience.

The work here is only an introduction to gendered speech in Aristophanes. Further research in this area could analyse other factors such as length of lines and complexity of language attributed to the sexes. A more nuanced study focusing on the differences of language attributed to women of different statuses and ages would be a natural next step. There has only been space here to study in detail a few examples of the way Aristophanes' male characters relate, such as in *Peace* and *Lysistrata* (p.169, n.41), *Ecclesiasuzae* (p.172 and n.47), and *Peace, Birds and Archarnians* (pp.181-82). More examples of the way male characters interact in other Aristophanic plays would provide yet further material for comparative study with the female interaction studied here in detail.

What we can identify again here, however, is a strong interest in the theme of the female group, and an attempt by the playwright, at times, to reproduce a different sort of language to reflect his female characters. Although this difference may convey more about stereotypical rather than authentic women's speech, the stylization of female discourse is shown in the plays to be as difficult for male characters to adopt as male discourse is for female characters to master. This suggests that Aristophanes desired to register a fundamental difference in his stage-sexes, the existence of which has been denied by such critics as Taaffe.

Comedy thus offers us our first example of what can be considered a relatively

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[59]Michael Silk, 'The People of Aristophanes', in Segal (n.46), pp.229-51 (*passim*), for the definition of the terms, pp.233, 237. A similar point was made by K. J. Dover in 'Language and Character in Aristophanes', in *Greece and the Greeks: Collected Papers*, I: *Language, Poetry, Drama*, by K. J. Dover (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp.237-48 (p.248).

positive representation of the female group. For the cooperative language and behaviour amongst women, which is both humorous and serious at the same time, is used to contrast with, and thus, 'point up' the factional world of male politics which Aristophanes was observing constantly around him during the time he was writing. It was this factional world of men, Aristophanes' own social group, that was the real target of his satire, rather than women. Aristophanes takes the common stereotypical negative (male) representations of the female group, and produces from it something quite surprising and different for the male audience to reflect upon. The 'women's way' acts as an example to the men - the seriousness of which we can only guess at - for peaceful relations in the factional world of male intra-and inter-state politics.

Part 2: The Female Group in Reality: How Women Saw Themselves

Chapter 4
Recognizing the Group Psychology of Women-Only Festivals

Introduction

Because the evidence for the women-only festivals of ancient Greece is very sketchy and problematic, we are only in a position to describe the most basic outline of each festival. Furthermore, these outlines are incomplete, may be inaccurate, and certainly do not tell us anything of the *female* experience of the festival. In the words of Winkler, what is missing is the 'alternative consciousness' or the 'women's perspective' of the festivals.[1] And indeed, some critics already read between the lines of the sources in an attempt to understand better the female experience of the festivals.[2] Fresh ways

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[1]John J. Winkler, 'The Laughter of the Oppressed: Demeter and the Gardens of Adonis', in *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*, by John J. Winkler (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), pp.188-209 (p.188).

[2]Apart from Winkler above, interesting works which debate the question of the female perspective in the women-only festivals include: Louise Bruit Zaidman, 'Pandora's Daughters and Rituals in Grecian Cities', in *A History of Women in the West,* ed. by Georges Duby and Michelle Perot, 5 vols (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press, 1992-94), I: *From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, ed. by Pauline Schmitt Pantel, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (1992), pp.338-76 (pp.370-71); Allaire Chandor Brumfield, *The Attic Festivals and their Relation to the Agricultural Year* (New York: Arno Press, 1981), pp.122-26; Marcel Detienne, *The Gardens of Adonis: Spices in Greek Mythology,* trans. by Janet Lloyd (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977); Lin Foxhall, 'Women's Ritual and Men's Work in Ancient Athens', in *Women in Antiquity: New Assessments,* ed. by Richard Hawley and Barbara Levick (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp.97-110 (pp.106-07); N. J. Lowe, 'Thesmophoria and Haloa: Myth, Physics and Mysteries', in *The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece*, ed. by Sue Blundell and Margaret Williamson (London and New York: Routledge, 1998),

of looking at the festivals, are, however, still required, so that we can gauge what they may have meant to women of fifth-century Greece. This chapter constitutes a new approach to the festivals, one which is informed by the social psychology of groups. Viewing the female festivals first and foremost as *groups* of women engaging in the pursuit of common goals may help to explain why the festivals could have been perceived negatively by male non-participants. And, more interestingly, it may help us to understand better the experiences of the female group members themselves.

Problems in studying the female festivals

Many problems arise when one attempts to ascertain the participants' perspective of the fifth-century women-only festivals. First, even if we did have living informants to ask, it is clear that there would be no one single perception of the festival experience, as each participant would have her own understanding of the ritual acts, or indeed, no understanding of the ritual acts. Sometimes the participants themselves cannot explain the effects of ritual on them, and may not know why they do certain things. Analyses of ritual therefore can never be exhaustive or definitive.[3]

Second, with no living informants to ask, we have to rely on secondary sources which are riddled with problems. We have two main sources of evidence for the fifth-century female festivals. The first is contemporary inscriptional evidence which gives

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pp.149-73 (pp.161-64); Lucia Nixon, 'The Cults of Demeter and Kore', in Hawley and Levick above, pp.75-96 (p.92); H. W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977), p.188; Froma I. Zeitlin, 'Cultic Models of the Female: Rites of Dionysus and Demeter', *Arethusa,* 15 (1982), 129-57 (p.130).

[3]For an understanding of the problems inherent in questioning participants about their ritual acts, see the anthropological works: J. H. M. Beattie, 'On Understanding Ritual', in *Rationality*, ed. by Bryan R. Wilson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), pp.240-68 (p.268); David I. Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics, and Power* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), p.76; Gilbert Lewis, *Day of Shining Red: An Essay on Understanding Ritual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp.218-19; and Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff, 'Introduction: Secular Ritual: Forms and Meanings', in *Secular Ritual*, ed. by Sally F. Moore and Barbara G. Myerhoff (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977), pp.3-24 (p.13).

details of such things as legislation on cult clothing and records of state expenditure on ritual sacrifices and equipment. This evidence is useful as far as it goes, for it is at least contemporary with the festivals, but it does not reveal to us much about the atmosphere of the occasions.[4] There is also much later scholastic evidence including commentaries on Classical literature, scholia and lexica of Byzantine date. These are clearly not eye-witness accounts, nor are they even contemporary with the fifth century. Not only are they anonymous, undatable and present difficulties when we want to trace their sources, they are also confused and, for the most part, imbued with Christian, anti-pagan bias on the unseemly nature of women-only activities.[5]

There is, however, a third source: evidence drawn from literature of Athens in the fifth and fourth centuries. This category of evidence is not often used in serious

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[4]Eva Keuls mentions the large number of dedicatory offerings and inscriptions made by women in the cult of Artemis at Brauron in *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Greece*, 2nd edn (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1993), pp.316-20. It is tempting to try to read from these inscriptions, which apparently record women's words, an account, or at least a hint of the female perspective of religious activity, but this must be avoided at all costs for several reasons. First, it is not clear who wrote inscriptions which are apparently from female dedicators. They could have been written by one of a number of others: priests, priestesses, family members other than the woman whose name appears on the dedication. It is probable that male relatives wrote many of the dedications in the case Keuls cites, as they are from women who died in childbirth. Second, the body of inscriptions to which Keuls may refer (although this is not certain) is *IG* II^2 1514-31, the so-called 'Brauronian inscriptions' i.e. the inventories of Artemis Brauronia found on the Acropolis in Athens. These constitute lists of female names and careful descriptions of objects, mostly garments dedicated to Artemis, and are possibly copies of lists of objects actually dedicated at the sanctuary of Brauron. By their nature as inventories, they give us a lot of detailed information about female clothing, but very little which can be used as evidence for the female perspective. Finally, they do not refer directly to the women-only maturation festival of Artemis Brauronia, and thus can tell us nothing about festival activities anyway. See Tullia Linders for a commentary on these records in *Studies in the Treasure Records of Artemis Brauronia Found in Athens* (Stockholm: Svenska institutet i Athen, 1972).

[5]See N. J. Lowe (n.2), pp.151-53 on the confusions in the scholia on Lucian, *Dialogues of the Courtesans* (*Dial. meret.*) 2.1 which is a famously cited source of information on the Thesmophoria, and on *Dial. meret.* 7.4 which describes the Haloa.

attempts to shed light on the festivals.[6] This evidence includes excerpts from history, philosophy, oratory and comedy. For instance, passages from Herodotus, Plato, Lysias and notably Aristophanes, who even wrote a play entitled *Thesmophoriazusae*. This third source of evidence, as it is both contemporary with the festivals in the fifth century and elaborates on the bare details from the inscriptional evidence, seems to offer the best chance of understanding the women-only festivals. These sources are also problematic, however, because they are all written by men, and so again, they do not offer a participant's perspective. The evidence is also plucked from different genres, all of which have their own specific reasons for including mention of the festivals, such as in comedy, to raise a laugh. In no way can these sources be assumed to be faithful records of the festival being described.

Evidence from the third category, however, even though it is pure male fantasy and very far from the female perspective of the festivals, is still the most useful for investigations both of the male perspective, and the female experience of the festivals. In terms of the male perspective of the festivals, the stories reflect the kind of perception which is commonly found in those who are not members of the group in question. Group theories from social psychology help us to recognize that there are stereotypical ways, characterized by fear and exaggeration, in which one commonly depicts groups of which one is not a member. Whilst we must be aware of the fact that the stories are all literary constructs, rather than reality, their frequency and similarity point to the existence, at some level, of a general male animosity towards (and fear of) the female collective, which can be explained partly by intergroup relations.

Using group psychology on these male-generated stories offers a useful insight into the male perspective of the female festivals, but can we be helped to understand the ever-elusive female experience of their festivals? If we understand the festivals

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[6]Marcel Detienne has been one of the few who has perceptively used the evidence on which I draw, in 'The Violence of Wellborn Ladies: Women in the Thesmophoria', in *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks*, ed. by Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, trans. by Paula Wissing (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp.129-47 (p.130).

primarily as sites of single-sex female group activity, as appears to be the conceptualization in the male stories, and if we draw on social identity theories from social psychology, we can understand what kinds of patterns of behaviour and attitudes are dictated by one's membership of a particular group. Here the group in question is that of women, and more precisely, women celebrating women-only festivals.

The chapter attempts to understand the significance of women-only festivals to fifth-century Greeks, using the case study of the Demeter festivals, especially the (Athenian) Thesmophoria.[7] The chapter provides insights into two different perspectives: the male perspective of the Demeter festivals and the female experience of participation in those festivals. The evidence used to help us understand the male perception of the festival is of the third type given above: the more fantastical references in literature. I would not dispute that the stories which are examined here are indeed male fantasy, but it is precisely as such - as male fear of the female collective - that they need to be reconsidered.[8]

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[7]I have not limited myself here to including only details from Athenian Thesmophoria. We have evidence of the festival from all over Greece. It appears that in the details of the festival procedures, and in the way the festival is portrayed, there are quite close correspondences. These similarities suggest that what is concluded for Athenian society in this chapter, could also probably be concluded for other *poleis* in Greece.

[8]Clearly the myths surrounding the female rituals of Dionysus present equally interesting material, which offer other examples of male fear of the female collective. Maenadism has been so well documented in recent times, that I have decided not to make it a central focus in this study. See for some bibliography on the topic, Chapter 5, n.28. In addition, see Richard Seaford, *Reciprocity and Ritual: Homer and Tragedy in the Developing City-State* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp.235-75, 293-301; and, for the myth surrounding the attack of Thracian women or Maenads on Orpheus, see Aeschylus's *Bassarae/Bassarides* (*TrGF* 3, frs 23-25, pp.138-40); M. L. West, 'Tragica VI', *BICS*, 30 (1987), 63-82 (pp.66-71); Maria-Xeni Garezou's entry, 'Orpheus', in *LIMC* 7.1, pp.81-105 (pp.85-88); and Fritz Graf, 'Orpheus: A Poet Among Men', in *Interpretations of Greek Mythology*, ed. by Jan N. Bremmer (London: Croom Helm, 1987), pp.80-106 (pp.85-87).

Sketch of the Thesmophoria

Before considering the male-generated stories concerning the festival, it would be useful to draw on the commonly cited, albeit questionable, evidence for the festival, from which we can construct a very general picture of the Thesmophoria, as it was practised at Athens and elsewhere in Greece.[9] To summarize the main points: the festival was pan-Hellenic, and, with proof of the existence of temples to Demeter *Thesmophoros* in thirty different cities across Greece, Asia Minor and Sicily, it was the most wide-spread Greek festival. Nilsson suggests that the little which is known about the Thesmophoria in areas outside Athens accords well with the more abundant information we have from Athens (p.324).

The festival took place on a number of days (between three and ten) in most areas in *Pyanopsion* (October/November) at the time of the Autumn sowing. In Athens, the festival took 3 days, and the ritual actions were connected with the myth of Demeter and Kore. The central act of the rite was the descent of women into trenches to bring back the decaying remains of piglets (a female sexuality symbol) which had been thrown down earlier. The women had also cast into the pits various objects made of dough, such as imitations of serpents and *phalloi* and they may also have cast down imitations of the female sexual organ. The animal remains were mixed with seed-corn (a male sexuality symbol) and put on altars as a dedication to Demeter to ensure future fertility in the crops and women themselves.[10] On the middle day, the

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[9]Details for the following brief sketch are drawn from: Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, trans. by John Raffan (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), pp.242-46; Brumfield (n.2), pp.79-88; Ludwig Deubner, *Attische Feste* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1956), pp.50-60; Erika Simon, *Festivals of Attica: An Archaeological Commentary* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), Chapter 2 (pp.17-37); Froma I. Zeitlin (n.2), pp.138-39; and Martin P. Nilsson on Demeter festivals outside Attica: *Griechische Feste von religiöser Bedeutung mit Ausschluss der Attischen* (repr. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1957), pp.313-25.

[10]But see the recent argument of N. J. Lowe (n.2), p.154. According to him, the dedication of symbolically fertile objects is a thank-offering to Demeter for the primal gift of crops and thus civilization, rather than an attempt, by sympathetic magic, to transfer the effect of those fertile objects to humans or crops.

women sat on the ground mourning, reenacting the grief of Demeter at the loss of her daughter. The ritual obscenities exchanged between the women at this time were an allusion to Iambe in myth who finally alleviated Demeter's grief (*Hom. Hymn Dem.* 201-04). On the final day, there was a sacrifice and a joyful celebration and feast to break the fasting of the previous days. It appears that in Athens and Thebes at least, the public activities of the men in the *polis* were completely halted, or compelled to move to other sites, since the Thesmophoria festival took place on the Pnyx in Athens (Ar. *Thesm.* 78-80). Here it is stated that there is no court or council on the middle day of Thesmophoria. And in Thebes, the women had their festival in the Kadmeia so the council had to be relocated to the agora porch (Xen. *Hell.* 5.2.29).

It is generally considered a women-only festival.[11] There is some evidence that men may have attended parts of the ceremony and were excluded from other parts.[12]

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[11]For instance: 'It is almost always from rites of Demeter and Dionysus that men are shut out', according to Robert Parker in *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p.82, n.34.

[12]See Susan Guettel Cole, '*Gynaiki ou Themis:* Gender Difference in the Greek *Leges Sacrae*', *Helios,* 19 (1992), 104-22 (p.113) and Burkert (no.9), p.245. The evidence they adduce for the presence of men, could also suggest that at the same Demeter sanctuary two Demeter festivals may be carried out; one for men and one for women. This would maintain in essence the single-sex environment. There clearly remained an opportunity for single-sex worship during the festival even if we accept that men attended some of the same rituals as women. Pausanias describes the seven-day festival of Mysian Demeter near Pellene in Arkadia. Here the festival clearly included men but they were strictly banned from the third day and the following night's worshipping, when even stray male dogs were driven away (7.27.9-10). A statute dating from the third century BC from a temple dedicated to Demeter at Mylasa in Caria states that there must be no men present at the ceremonies. The man who slaughters the sacrificial victims is enjoined to leave the rite as soon as his task is completed (*LSAM* 61.8-10). Cole also stresses the way that men had an influence on what went on at the Thesmophoria since it was a state official, *prostatas,* and public magistrates, *hieromnēmones*, who tightly controlled the workings of the festival by deciding what contributions should be made by the female officials, *arkhousai.* Not only was a tight male control kept on the religious matters and the spending for the festival, and, according to Isaeus, the individual women's husbands paid for them to attend (3.80), but also, there were many restrictions and regulations encoded by the state on the dress and behaviour of the women from the sixth century right through to the third (p.114) (e.g.

The precise legislation on the festival may have varied between cities in Greece and may have changed through time. Certainly, Aristophanes indicates strongly that, for Athens of the fifth century, the Thesmophoria was a women-only affair (*Thesm.* 376, 471-73, 589-91, 626-28, 657, 1150-51).

If we assume that women were primarily the participants of the festival, another important issue must be considered if one is to approach the Thesmophoria in terms of the social psychology of distinct groups: namely, what sort of women attended the festival. Can they be thought of as a homogeneous group or were there important distinctions amongst them as a group? The question pivots on whether the attendees were exclusively wives of citizens, or whether unmarried women, slaves and *hetairai* also gained entrance to the festival.

This question is notoriously difficult to answer with any certainty. The evidence for the participants of the Thesmophoria in Athens in the Classical period and beyond is ambiguous. There are some references which suggest that the only participants were well-born women: εὐγενεῖς γυναῖκες (Ar. *Thesm.* 330). In *Thesmophoriazusae,* the slave girl is dismissed before the speeches start, because things will be said which slaves are not allowed to hear (293-94 (294 may be spurious)). Slaves, however, are clearly somewhere nearby to expose the relation of Euripides who had entered the festival as an imposter (537). A nursemaid (τίτθη) is identified as being present when Cleisthenes starts searching for the male imposter (609). And the typical slave name Mania is called out twice to help fetch wood to set the intruder on fire (728 and 739). In Isaeus, however, the Thesmophoria is, or at least, ought to be, only attended by women of good repute and legitimate wives of citizen men (3.80, 6.49-50, 8.19-20). But, as a legal text, we must be cautious with its evidence which might posit the idealized situation rather than the everyday norm.

LSS 28, *LSS* 32, *LSCG* 102, *LSS* 33). Cole says 'the administration of women's cults and festivals fell under the responsibility of local governments' (p.114). This does not detract from the fact that the events themselves were, in all important ways, women's affairs. Indeed, the attempt of officialdom to impinge on the festivals seems to betray a fear the male state may have had of its utter exclusion from the women-only events.

Critics are compelled to use late evidence to prove their points either way, drawing on such writers as Callimachus, Lucian, Menander, and Alciphron. It is questionable, however, how helpful this evidence is for fifth-century Athens.[13]

Perhaps we are presented with ambiguous evidence because there were parts of the ritual activities which were more public, at which slaves and young unmarried women were in attendance, and parts which were reserved for an élite sub-group of married women. But we do not have enough evidence to state this categorically. Again, the precise legislation on the social characteristics of the participants would have varied from place to place and may have relaxed during the fourth and third centuries.

If the Thesmophoria were attended only by married wives of citizens, and slaves and *hetairai* were completely excluded, it is still possible to recognize that the noble women constituted a group, whose main opposite group was men. An élite group of εὐγενεῖς γυναῖκες at the Thesmophoria would have naturally defined themselves in contrast to such other outgroups, who were not attending the festival, as women of different statuses, e.g. *hetairai* and slaves, and those of a different age, *parthenoi* and post-menopausal women. But their main outgroup would have been that of men, especially if we adopt the view of those social identity theorists who hold that the most fundamental social identity of all is constituted by sexual identity (see Introduction, p.19 and n.22). The fact that we may only have, then, one subcategory of women at the Thesmophoria does not invalidate a social psychological study of the intergroup relations between men and women. After all, as the Thesmophoria was concerned with fertility, clearly *sexual* identity would have been important.

If we take the view that the Thesmophoria was not strictly an affair of married wives, we must establish how it is possible to speak of the group of women attending

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[13]See Marcel Detienne (n.6), p.137 who cites Callimachus fr.63 as clear evidence for the Classical age that young women were not admitted to the Attic Thesmophoria until they had been married. See *Callimachus*, ed. by Rudolf Pfeiffer, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1949-53), I: *Fragmenta* (1949). Brumfield (n.2), pp.86-87 cites Lucian, *Dial. meret.* 2.1 to establish that both *hetairai* and unmarried women were present at the Thesmophoria festivals.

as an homogeneous group. There is a principle which can establish the relative homogeneity of the female group in the context of the Demeter festivals.

For there have been attempts recently in Classical scholarship to suggest that most gender distinctions cut across class distinctions in Classical Athens, and that status was less significant for ties between women, than for men, because female relationships were less politicized.[14] Those classicists who propose such ideas of egalitarianism between women in androcentric societies draw on both Classical and comparative evidence from modern social anthropology. The modern evidence indicates that, for many androcentric societies, it is generally less important for women to define themselves by status rather than sex.[15] There is much, then, to recommend

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[14]See David M. Schaps, 'What was Free about a Free Athenian Woman?', *TAPhA*, 128 (1998), 161-88 (p.185); and Lin Foxhall, 'The Politics of Affection: Emotional Attachments in Athenian Society', in *Kosmos: Essays in Order, Conflict and Community in Classical Athens*, ed. by Paul Cartledge, Paul Millett, and Sitta von Reden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.52-67 (pp.63-65).

[15]For the justification of using contemporary social anthropology in comparative study with the ancient world, see Chapter 5. See the following useful comparative evidence in the study by Ursula Sharma of Indian women in a Himalyan village where the strict segregation women experience creates a sense of solidarity amongst women, in as much as they realize that their common situation provides a basis for cooperation and mutual support: 'Segregation and its Consequences in India: Rural Women in Himachal Pradesh', in *Women United, Women Divided: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Female Solidarity*, ed. by Patricia Caplan and Janet M. Bujra (London: Tavistock Publications, 1978), pp.259-82 (p.260). Sharma also cites the interesting work of Rama Mehta on p.274 who describes the intimate cooperation between maidservants and the Purdah women of Rajasthan. The servants are treated like family members and liaise closely with the women of the household for whom they act as go-betweens with the outside world: 'From Purdah to Modernity', in *Indian Women from Purdah to Modernity* ed. by B. R. Nanda (New Delhi: Vikas Press, 1976). One could compare Lysias 1 and the liaison between slave and mistress to deceive the husband with this model. See also Henry Rosenfeld's assessment of women in virilocal societies being non-hierarchical, not because women are especially just and value equality, but because they see their common oppressed condition as women, and do not allow distinctions to rise amongst themselves: 'Non-hierarchical, Hierarchical and Masked Reciprocity in an Arab Village', *AQ*, 47 (1974) [Special Issue: *Visiting Patterns and Social Dynamics in Eastern Mediterranean Communities*, ed. by Amal Vinogradov et al.], 139-65 (p.149). Lastly, see the work of Lila Abu-Lughod on the Awlad ʿAli tribe of Bedouins in the

Winkler's pithy assessment when describing the relationship between *hetairai* and legitimate wives in Classical Athens: 'It may be doubted that Athenian women always felt as strongly about this social differentiation as their husbands and Detienne do'.[16] If we follow these theories, the women attending the Thesmophoria, if they did constitute a mixture of social statuses, would have perceived their common sexual identity to be more important than their differing social statuses. They would have thus formed an homogeneous group, whose natural outgroup would have been that of men.

Drawing on a more nuanced approach than above, it is my belief that no single general rule can be offered to explain female behaviour in all cases.[17] In some cases, women and slaves would have forgotten status distinctions and become allies against men (e.g. Lys. 1.8, 1.11, 1.16, 1.20). But in other cases, the status difference between free-born citizen wives, slaves and *hetairai* would have been paramount and much more significant than gender differences ([Dem.] 48.53-58, [Dem.] 59.110-14). Another important variable which is easily overlooked, is that some women may have regarded status differences between themselves and *hetairai* and slaves as very

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Egyptian Western Desert. She writes of the 'easy familiarity in interactions between women of various ages and social statuses in all-female gatherings', which 'contrasts sharply with the formality that characterizes their interactions with men. [...] Men spend their time with other men, in a social world that is more hierarchical and less intimate than that of the women.' See 'A Community of Secrets: The Separate World of Bedouin Women', *Signs*, 10 (1985), 637-57 (p.650).

[16]Winkler (no.1), p.201 cites the work of Unni Wikan, who describes a modern society in Oman, where social ideology dictates the usual distinction between adulterous women and virtuous wives. In reality, however, it is found that groups of female friends are constituted of a mixture of 'good' wives and adulterous women, with no lines of demarcation between them. Adulterous women are only eligible to be reprimanded by their husbands. Their fellow women ignore the fact that they are flagrantly breaking societal rules, and they only judge them on their qualities as helpful neighbours. See Unni Wikan, 'Shame and Honour: A Contestable Pair', *Man,* 19 (1984), 635-52.

[17]See also Steven Johnstone, 'Cracking the Code of Silence: Athenian Legal Oratory and the Histories of Slaves and Women', in *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture: Differential Equations*, ed. by Sandra R. Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp.221-35 (pp.233-34).

significant, whereas others may not have. The personal nature of such feelings means that it is impossible to determine one rule about inter-group female relationships.

There is another more nuanced possibility for understanding women and their intragroup perceptions. For the precise definition of attendance at a festival may have varied depending on the participant's perspective. For instance, the slave girl who served her mistress at the ceremony may consider that she was amongst the participants, whereas her mistress may have considered that it was she alone and not her slave who participated in the festival. We must be sensitive to the individual's perspective, and admit that there may be no one single answer to the complex issue of what sort of women attended the Thesmophoria.

On balance, I would conclude that a variety of women attended the Thesmophoria, and that social class and age status were probably less significant than sex in their group affiliation. This conclusion is also suggested by recent research by Ariadne Staples in the case of the women-only December festival of *Bona Dea* in Rome. This festival is often examined in a comparative analysis with the Thesmophoria, and there is just as much ambiguity in the sources as to whether only well-born matrons attended or whether unmarried girls, concubines and slave girls were present.[18] As the festival was held in the house of the magistrate, and the women of his family had a leading role to play, well-born women undoubtedly had a prominent part in the rites. Staples also maintains, however, that such women were not the only participants. She maintains that the use of the loaded word *puellae,* found often in the literary sources to describe the participants, is significant, as it can refer to various categories of women. It implies that the most important characteristic of the participants is their common sexual identity as women.

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[18]See for example the comparative study in H. S. Versnel, 'The Roman Festival for Bona Dea and the Greek Thesmophoria', in *Inconsistencies in Greek and Roman Religion,* II: *Transition and Reversal in Myth and Ritual,* by H. S. Versnel (Leiden: Brill, 1994), pp.229-88.

> It also implies that in this instance the concept of sexual categorization does not apply: *Puellae* has the effect of embracing all female categories at once. The boundaries that the Bona Dea draws are between male and female, not between the various categories of the female.[19]

Since it has been established that the most salient social identity of the women at the Thesmophoria would have been their sexual identity, the most immediate outgroup of the women attending the festival would have been men.

This description of the participants and structure of the festival above is enough to establish a few key points about the festival which may have varied depending on exactly where the festival was being held in Greece, and how late the date was. It was not just a very important and widespread festival which women took part in on an annual basis. But it became the focus of the city for the days it ran, and was where every non-participant's gaze must have fallen. And most importantly, it was a women's affair which excluded men.

Male fantasies of the female collective

The evidence which is discussed to exemplify the exaggerated male stories about the female collective consists of four colourful stories about Demeter *Thesmophoros* festivals. Only one of the stories directly alludes to the Thesmophoria at Athens, while the others describe festivals from Paros, Laconia and Cyrene. Two of the stories derive from the fifth century and are recorded in works very well-known at Athens, and two are recorded in the works of reliable writers from the second century AD, who drew on earlier sources, and were especially interested in describing Greece in the fifth and fourth centuries.

The first is in Herodotus, (6.134-36) where Miltiades sneaked into the temple of Demeter Thesmophoros in Paros on the advice of a Parian priestess, Timo, who had

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[19]Ariadne Staples, *From Good Goddess to Vestal Virgins: Sex and Category in Roman Religion* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p.31.

suggested that this would be the only sure way to capture the city. Herodotus cannot imagine what Miltiades intended to do in the temple. He assumes that it was his desire to meddle with some of the sacred objects there. Miltiades was seized by a fit of trembling and in his panic to leave as soon as possible, he leapt the fence and badly wounded his leg. The Parians were outraged that Timo had told Miltiades of the secret rites which should not have been made public to anyone of the male sex. And Miltiades never recovered from his leg wound but died of gangrene in Athens shortly afterwards.

The second story concerns the female celebrants of Demeter in Laconia, described in Pausanias (4.17.1). The women of Aegila were celebrating a festival in Demeter's sanctuary, and defended themselves with sacrificial knives and spits when Aristomenes and his men came to disturb their rites. The women wounded many of the Messenians with the knives (*makairai*), with which they had sacrificed their victims in the ritual, and with the spits (*obeloi*) used to pierce and roast the meat. Aristomenes was incapacitated by being struck by torches, but managed to escape. Some said that he was able to escape because the priestess of Demeter had fallen in love with him. She claimed, however, that he had burnt through his bonds to freedom.

The third similar story is found in an Aelian fragment (fr.44) describing how king Battos of Cyrene wanted to satisfy his 'greedy eyes' at the local Thesmophoria. When he was prevented from viewing the most sacred rites, he resorted to violence. But the women responded in their frenzied state with violence themselves, becoming σφάκτριαι (slaughterers). They leapt on Battos with faces and hands bloodied from the animal victims which they had just been sacrificing, and took their swords to him to 'rob him of that part which made him male'.[20]

And lastly, a story which looks like a comic conflation of the above three appears in Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae*, where Euripides' relative suffers at the hands of women celebrating the Athenian Thesmophoria. The play features a male intruder who is forbidden from seeing what goes on at the festival (1150-51). He manages, however, to gain entrance to the festival in disguise, and, when the women

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[20]The Greek passage is found in Nilsson (n.9), p.325, n.1.

discover his male identity, he is threatened with violence in comic ways which parody the violence of the above stories. The celebrants attempt to strip him to expose his genitals thus furnishing proof that he is a man, and there follows a comic scene of them hunting for his penis (643). This brings to mind the castration scene in the Battos story. The relative threatens to sacrifice one of their children (in reality, a wineskin) at the altar (695ff), with a *makaira*, which reminds us of females sacrificing animal victims as in the account by Pausanias. The women content themselves in the end by threatening the intruder with fire (726-29).

The stories clearly have a common theme. They are all rather prurient male encounters (or potential encounters) with groups of women celebrating various rites of Demeter. The men/man breaks into a temple of Demeter *Thesmophoros* somewhere in Greece or actually attempts to spy on a Thesmophoria festival in action. He is promptly chased away or runs off in sheer fright, and is often maimed or castrated by the group of celebrating women who have suddenly turned violent.[21]

These stories cannot be treated with even as much credibility as the Byzantine sources for the truth of the festivals. They are clearly much closer to fantasy than fact. But it is important to recognize that the stories form part of a greater network of

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[21]The *leges sacrae* list a number of men-only festivals from which women were excluded. Cole (n.12), p.106 notes that they were most often concerned with male divinities, such as Hercules (as hero), Zeus Hypaios, Zeus Amalios, Zeus Apotropaios, Poseidon Phykios, and the Egyptian gods. She adds that the cults which excluded women often celebrated specifically male activities and characteristics, and were focused on male professions, athletics, war and certain heroes. We do not, however, have similar stories of shocking male behaviour, equivalent to the female behaviour, in the context of these men-only festivals. This fact could relate to the origin of the negative stories about the female festivals being in the male citizen community, which would not seek to negatively depict groups analogous to its own. The concept of sudden violent behaviour is so deeply attached to the women-only festival, that in one example of male group aggression, the men are even disguised as female Thesmophoria celebrants. Plutarch tells how Solon tricks the Megarians into approaching some women celebrating a Thesmophoria at Cape Colias. And yet again, the celebrants appear excessively violent in defending themselves. In this case, however, female Thesmophoria celebrants are used as a cover to lull the suspicions of the attacking Megarians. The celebrants turn out to be beardless youths concealing daggers under their cloaks who attack and kill every last Megarian (Plut. *Vit. Sol.* 8.4-6).

stories describing male anxieties about the female group that were prevalent both in the Classical period, and recorded in post-Classical works which reflected the Classical period. A common link between the bizarre festival stories and the stories of such mythic groups as the Amazons, Danaids and Lemnians, is that the fear is incited by a *group* of women who are acting on their own beyond male control. If we focus on the importance of the group nature of the festival, there is a wealth of useful insight to be drawn from the study of groups in social psychology.

The myths of the female collective

Behind all these fantastic stories concerning women-only festivals and temples, there are three kinds of myth or assumptions about women, which all highlight the danger inherent in the female group. These assumptions lie beyond the insights that can be derived strictly from intergroup relations, but they complement rather than contradict the findings from group psychology in this chapter. The three paradigms include: first, the common myth of the male voyeuristic experience of the female group, when a girl is snatched away from her playmates (or the reversal of this, where a voyeuristic man pays the penalty for spying at the hands of the female group); second, the psychological and physiological instability of the female, and, by extension, the female group; and third, the notoriously negative effect of one woman on another in the group context.

One important body of myth describes men who stalk women, often when they are in an all-female group. The men stalk with the intent to abduct the women or play voyeur of what they imagine are female sexual activities. The classic case of this must be Persephone snatched by Hades from a group of girls picking flowers in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*. This is significant to our study since the Thesmophoria festival clearly drew on symbolism from the Demeter-Kore myth. One could also mention the episodes of woman-stealing at the beginning of Herodotus, or later in the work, when women are snatched by Pelasgians while celebrating the rites of Artemis at Brauron

(6.138).[22] The sexual vulnerability of the women in these groups goes hand-in-hand in other stories with great danger for the male onlookers. Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae* desires to take up a hiding place to view the Maenadic women roaming drunk in the mountains, and Dionysus teases him with the prospect of a voyeuristic experience (811-17). He soon meets his demise, however, dismembered by the frenzied group of women. His death is reminiscent of Actaeon's death, who happened to glimpse Artemis bathing in the forest, and was turned by her into a stag and torn to shreds by his own pack of hunting dogs.[23]

A second assumption about women behind the stories describing their violent behaviour concerns their essential female natures, both in terms of their psychology and physiology.[24] From Pythagoras right through to Aristotle and beyond, women, unlike men, were thought to possess irrational psyches and unstable physiologies defining their natures. They were prone to hysterical behaviour because of both their mental irrationality and their biological instability. Women were thought to lose control more readily than men because of their innately wet nature, and the liquefying nature of emotions and appetites themselves. Being thoroughly dry in constitution, men were more able to resist attacks by these liquid emotions, and thus could remain generally more rational. Bennett Simon comments on the similarities between the bodily behaviour of a woman having an hysterical seizure and those women involved in some *group* ecstatic or semi-orgiastic experience who experience lack of control

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[22]For the theme of the abduction of women from groups, see Steven H. Lonsdale, *Dance and Ritual Play in Greek Religion* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), pp.175, 184-86, 203-05, 222-33.

[23]We are reminded of a variant of this story in the *Bacchae* itself, when Cadmus reminds Pentheus of Actaeon's tragic end. According to Cadmus, Actaeon had boasted that he was a better hunter than Artemis, and, as a result, was torn to pieces and devoured by the hounds he had bred himself (*Bacch.* 337-40).

[24]See Chapter 2 for extensive descriptions of the ancient perceptions of female biology and psychology.

and the sense of being 'dissociated'.[25] Also the descriptions of the state of ecstasy achieved by women in the cult of Dionysus are similar to the heightened and rather manic state of the women in the stories of the Demeter festivals above.[26] It appears that the hysterical nature of the individual female and the female group are fundamentally related. The irrational behaviour in the female group which will result if women are beyond a man's *kurieia*, is reflected at the biological level by the image of the 'wandering womb'. The womb wreaks havoc in the female body causing hysterical behaviour if it is not kept under man's control by being fertilized on a regular basis (Plato, *Ti.* 91c).

There is a third commonly attested assumption about the female group behind the stories of the violent women of the Thesmophoria, and this is the most significant for this study. Women together, without the supervision of men, invariably influence each other negatively, often passing on sexual secrets and encouraging licentiousness. In Semonides, the good 'bee' woman is the only one who shuns the company of women when they gather to talk about Aphrodite (fr.7.90-91).[27] In Euripides' *Andromache,* Hermione speaks of the damage caused by listening to the poisonous talk of visiting women (943-53). Sometimes women apparently encourage each other to even greater crimes than sexual disgrace. A group of women banded together,

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[25]Bennett Simon, *Mind and Madness in Ancient Greece: The Classical Roots of Modern Psychiatry* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp.251-52.

[26]See the groundbreaking cross-cultural study of I. M. Lewis on peripheral cults, amongst which the ancient rite of Dionysus is included: *Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971). Lewis finds basic structural similarities in many different rituals of possession, and suggests that the likelihood of a particular group engaging in an ecstatic rite is dependent on its social condition, rather than its sex. The peripheral in society are more likely to be involved in ecstatic cults, as they would seek a means to escape their oppressed and restricted status. Since role asymmetry to the advantage of the male exists in so many societies that it almost constitutes a cultural universal, it is not surprising that women appear to have a central role in these possession cults.

[27]See Hugh Lloyd-Jones (ed.), *Females of the Species: Semonides on Women* (London: Duckworth, 1975).

according to Herodotus, to stone Lycides' wife and children to death. Lycides had supported Mardonius's call for peace with the Persians at Salamis in the *Boulē* in 479 BC, and the Athenians killed him in disgust. The women were inspired to do the same to his wife and children and proceeded in their blood-lust to his house where they stoned them, as Herodotus recounts, 'with one woman encouraging the next' (Hdt. 9.5.3 cf. Dem. 18.204).

In a different story narrated by Herodotus, Athenian women gathered around the one survivor of the battle of Aegina, and, in grief at the loss of their husbands, stabbed him to death with the brooches on their clothes, each one asking where her own husband was (5.87.2). The Athenians described the stabbing as 'the women's deed' (*τὸ τῶν γυναικῶν ἔργον*), which can be compared with another formulation including *ἔργον* in Herodotus - 'Lemnian *ἔργα*'. This phrase is explained by the historian as the common way to describe any truly wicked deed after two incidents in Lemnos, one of which was the wholesale massacre of the island's men by the Lemnian women (6.138.4).[28]

Such violent corporate action is found in several other stories concerning women attacking men.[29] It is epitomized, however, in such archetypal mythic groups

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[28]Nicole Loraux details examples of the word *ἔργον* to show that it was traditionally used to refer to women's crime, especially when the victim was male. She cites the murder of Itys (Thuc. 2.29.3), the Lemnian crime above, and even passages in the *Odyssey* describing the *mega ergon* of Melantho, the leader of the faithless serving women (Hom. *Od.* 19.92), and the wicked *erga* of Clytemnestra which cast a shadow over any good works by faithful women (Hom. *Od.* 11.424-34, 24.191-202). See Nicole Loraux, *The Experiences of Tiresias: The Feminine and the Greek Man,* trans. by Paula Wissing (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp.245-47.

[29]There is a collection of rather dubious (and similar) stories concerning women who, in dire straits, don armour and rout male armies to protect their homeland. These stories often act as *aitia* conveniently introduced to explain the existence of odd statues or festivals, rather than representing the historical truth. It is interesting that the stories exist, however, and exploit the potential violence of the female collective. First, there are several references to the defeat of the Spartans by the Argives at the battle of Sepeia (circa 520-490 BC). Herodotus related an oracle proclaiming that women would prevail over men and win glory among the Argives. It is, however, the slaves who are credited with ruling in Argos after the battle (6.77, 83). Further details are given in Plutarch,

of female transgressors as the Danaids, Lemnian women and Amazons (see Chapter 1). Interestingly, the Thesmophoria is directly linked with those murdering wives, the Danaids, when Herodotus suggests that Pelasgian women were taught the rites of Demeter Thesmophoros by the Danaids (2.171). Unlike the more unofficial gatherings of women in fifth-century Athens such as the Adonia, the Thesmophoria was a fully state-sanctioned festival, which had a place in the annual festival calendar, and should thus have always been viewed with respect. Although it was sometimes portrayed as a serious state festival, accorded great respect (Isae. 3.80, 6.49-50, 8.19-20), it paradoxically also evoked images of the archetypal violent female groups of myth.[30]

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when the poet Telesilla is said to have led an army of women dressed as men who routed the Spartans. A monument to *Enyalios* (God of Warriors) was erected and the festival of *Hybristika* was inaugurated at which cross-dressing occurred (Plut. *De mul. vir.* 4.245c-f, cf. Paus. 2.20.8-10). Second, a similar tale describes how Tegean women, during the Laconian War, successfully routed a Spartan attack led by king Charillus, after their men had failed. Marpessa (or Choira) distinguished herself above all, and a statue to Ares *Γυναικοθοίνας* ('The feaster of women' or 'The one to whom the women feast') was erected in the Tegean Agora (Paus. 8.48.4-5). A third story of this sort concerns Spartan women who erected a temple to 'Aphrodite the Warlike' to commemorate their victory over the Messenians, when a party of them attacked Sparta. Spartan men almost killed their own wives who they had not recognized in their unusual warlike costumes, and when the men realized their mistake they made love to their wives on the spot (Lactant. *Div. inst.* 1.20.29-32). Fritz Graf imagines that the stories functioned as 'reference by inversion' and that they gained their semantic value through their stark opposition to ordinary life, where the world of women and the world of fighting were poles apart. I do not think that this needs to be the only interpretation of the stories. For they could also follow the pattern of the male fear of the potential ability of women to be preternaturally destructive, when seriously provoked: in this case, when their homes are under direct attack. After all, in Thucydides, on two separate occasions during the Peloponnesian War women are credited with contributing to the fighting by screaming and throwing tiles and stones down from rooftops when their homes are under threat (Thuc. 2.4.2, 3.74). In the latter case, the women are credited with actions that are indeed *παρὰ φύσιν*, but in extreme circumstances, the women have the potential to do anything. See F. Graf, 'Women, War, and Warlike Divinities', *ZPE*, 55 (1984), 245-54 (p.254).

[30]See the evidence Detienne gives for the state-sanctioned nature of the Thesmophoria and its position in structural opposition to the Adonia as a festival for prostitutes: Detienne (n.2), throughout, but especially pp.102-06. See also Winkler's criticism of this structuralist thesis: Winkler (n.1), pp.193-202.

An explanation, over and above the three common assumptions about women given above can be offered if we see both the activities of the mythic female aggressors and the females celebrating the Thesmophoria as primarily women engaged in group activity which excluded men.

The application of social identity to the study of the Thesmophoria

As I have argued, the four stories concerning the female festivals of Demeter fit into the general pattern of stories which articulate male assumptions and fear of female collective activity. From the case of the Amazons, and ecstatic women inspired by Dionysus, right through to women simply gathering together for informal socializing, there seems to be a perception that there exists a need for male outsiders to be wary. The common link in these stories is that the activity is carried out by a female-only collective, where male participation is excluded. If we consider the female festivals of Demeter in the light of the fact that we are dealing with female group-activity which excludes men, we can postulate, with some help from the social psychology of groups, both the male outsider's perception of the group, and the possible female (insiders') perception of their group identity.[31]

The male perspective

Theories based on the social identity perspective can help us to understand why there are so many similarly structured stories encapsulating the male fear of the women-only Demeter festivals. In fifth-century Greece, men and women in Athens, and most probably many other cities, operated in quite distinct spheres of action. Women did not operate as a rule in the public parts of the *polis* (except in religious contexts), and did not witness the exclusively male Assembly and lawcourt proceedings. Men were not allowed to witness the female group activities of the Thesmophoria. So, whilst men and women could live together without disruption in their family groups, when those

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[31]Details of the origins and development of social identity theory, and its application to a study of literary groups is given fully in the Introduction (pp.13-23).

same families split up to pursue activities in their other social groups, such as in the case of the women-only Demeter festivals, men and women would have become acutely aware of their contrasting social groups and social identities. Competition rather than cooperation would have entered the intergroup dynamics. For as has already been explained, being the member of a group brings with it a whole set of behavioural styles with regard to the stereotypic and negative way one views outgroups, and the way one regards the merits of one's own group. It is difficult to explain why else an official, state-sanctioned festival for the benefit of the whole *polis,* for both men and women and the fertility of the land, could generate such fantastic and negative stereotypical tales. The stories are imbued with male society's collective feeling of exclusion from, and prejudice against, the female group. This would explain why the stories so often depict female group activity stereotypically as illicit, irrational, and dangerous.

Three interesting (and allied) conclusions about the male perspective of the women-only festival can be drawn when one focuses on the intergroup perspective. First, the Thesmophoria stories described above are all very similar. They could be described as stereotypes, images which all conform to a standardized norm. The female groups in the stories are homogenized and represent one kind of danger. There is evidence from social psychology that people perceptually homogenize outgroup members in a way that they do not in relation to their own group. This is called the 'outgroup homogeneity effect'.[32] Especially when we are unfamiliar with a particular group, we may rely on hearsay and little evidence to formulate generalizations about the whole group. This would certainly have been the case in fifth-century Greece, because men were excluded from participation in the female festivals and would have been left to guess at the precise proceedings.

Second, the stories all describe the women at the Demeter festivals as engaged in dubious activities and violent when approached. The female Thesmophoria groups

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[32]Michael A. Hogg and Graham M. Vaughan, *Social Psychology: An Introduction* (London and Sydney: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1995), p.335.

are thus depicted negatively, as in the case of other kinds of female groups. We have already discovered from social identity theory that, in order to evaluate one's own group positively (to maintain high self-esteem), an ingroup member will focus on the negative attributes of the outgroup and discriminate against its members. To give a more light-hearted example of this, Euripides in Aristophanes' comic version of a Thesmophoria, believes that the festival is where a plot will be hatched against him and a vote taken to ensure his destruction (*Thesm.* 81-84, 181-82). Agathon refuses to help him because he believes he would fare even worse than Euripides if he went to the festival, because of the women's jealousy of his sexual appeal to men (*Thesm.* 203-05). The first speaker in the Assembly-style meeting advocates death for Euripides by poison or any other means to ensure his demise (*Thesm.* 428-31), and the female chorus zealously searches for any other men who are hidden in their midst to make examples of them (*Thesm.* 663-85). This exaggeratedly negative depiction of the outgroup is shown to be especially the characteristic of dominant and high-status groups which perceive themselves to be in a more powerful position than the outgroup.[33] Again, this would be especially appropriate to sexual groups in ancient Athens, where women did not have the same access to state-sanctioned power bases, and men would have considered them a lower-status group.

Third, studies in social psychology have indicated that the more anxious people become, the more they rely on their existing beliefs and stereotypes of the outgroup. Outgroup behaviour which appears to disconfirm a person's strongly held stereotypes has less impact when one is emotionally aroused in any way. This is called the anxiety-assimilation hypothesis. For when one is anxious, one relies more heavily on well-established stereotypes and thus assimilates the external stimuli to already existing cognitive schemata. The stereotyped image of the outgroup is thus not easily shattered

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[33]Itesh Sachdev and Richard Bourhis, 'Ethnolinguistic Vitality: Some Motivational and Cognitive Considerations', in *Group Motivation: Social Psychological Perspectives*, ed. by Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), pp.33-51 (p.34)

when one is anxious.[34] With images and tales of such frightening female groups as the Amazons colouring the culture and psyche of the fifth century, it would not be surprising if the anxiety level of the male group were raised at the prospect of contact with an exclusively female group, such as a group of women celebrating a Thesmophoria. This would have the result that the male group would assimilate any disconfirming outgroup behaviour, i.e. positive behaviour, in the direction of how the group *was expected* to behave, rather than how it actually did behave. This may explain why it is possible to collect considerably more negative references to female festivals than positive ones. And if it is true that the social existence of women as a group in Classical Athens had a higher profile than we have given it credit for, this also would have increased the anxiety of the male ingroup, and fostered further critical stories concerning the women-only festivals.

The female perspective

So much for the male perception of the female festivals. Social identity theory can also help us to propose some reasonable suggestions for the female perception of her festival activity.

During their absence from home at the Thesmophoria festival, which has been attested as lasting from anything between three to seven days, one particular social identity would have been more salient than others to the women. It would not be that of their nationality, or *polis,* or family unit, which may well have been their salient social identities at other times, but that of their sexual identity.

Knowledge that one is a member of a group determines behaviour and perception of the self. Such basic psychological traits as group favouritism, conformity to group norms, solidarity, enjoyment of the group and positive evaluation of group activities are commonly attested in social psychology in group behaviour. Some of these feelings can be hypothesized, and others attested for the female group in the

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[34]David A. Wilder, 'Freezing Intergroup Evaluations: Anxiety Fosters Resistance to Counterstereotypic Information', in Hogg and Abrams (n6.33), pp.68-86 (p.70)

context of the Thesmophoria.

We have an intimation of how important, or indeed enjoyable, festivals must have been to women, when a common punishment for a woman's transgressive behaviour was her suspension from all *exodoi* and gatherings of women at marriages and birth celebrations (Pl. *Leg.* 784d4-8). Pseudo-Demosthenes cites a law banning adulterous women from being involved in any public sacrifices (59.87). Aeschines claims that this was a Solonian law so that good women did not become corrupted by the influence of bad women (1.183).[35] And indeed Plutarch attributes certain prohibitive laws to Solon which attempted to eradicate any disorder and intemperance 'at *exodoi* of women and in their mourning and their festivals' *(Vit. Sol.* 21.5). Male law-givers obviously knew where to strike to make a point: straight at the heart of the female community.

There are two other insights about the female groups at Demeter festivals which are suggested by social identity theory. First, it is a commonly recognized phenomenon that in groups where the boundaries of membership are virtually impenetrable, e.g. race and sex, where there is little possibility of individuals moving out of their group, members are most inclined to identify with their group. They also show an especially high degree of ingroup identification if they perceive that the categorization of their group as low-status is illegitimate. They adopt, therefore, collective strategies to create a more positive social identity for their group. Such strategies are encompassed by the term 'social change' coined by Tajfel.[36] Three

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[35]See *LSAM* 16, the Gambreion inscription, thought to be from the third century BC, which states the penalties for men and women who do not wear the correct mourning attire for the correct number of months. Mourning has its limit, after which men and women must reengage in public activities. Whilst both sexes are cursed if they do not follow the legislation, women have the additional punishment of being deprived of participating in any sacrifice for ten years. Copies of the legislation were even put up at the Thesmophorion and the precinct of Artemis Lochia to be noticed, presumably, especially by the women. This action suggests that the loss of the right to participate in religious activity would have not been an insignificant thing to women.

[36]Henri Tajfel, 'Interindividual Behaviour and Intergroup Behaviour', in *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup*

different strategies of social change are commonly adopted. First, 'assimilation' or 'merger' can occur. In this strategy, the lower status group attempts to assimilate culturally or psychologically into the superior group, attempting to dissolve the comparative process which maintains the intergroup tensions. Second, 'social creativity' is the psychological strategy by which the lower-status group seeks to create a new and positive image for itself. Subordinate groups can reinterpret negative features attributed to them so that they become positive, for instance in the 'Black is Beautiful' consciousness of the 1960s. Third 'social competition' could be adopted, through which the subordinate group seeks to compare itself with other even lower-status groups, by which the group attempts to achieve a more positive distinctiveness.

The women of the Demeter festivals may have identified with their group especially strongly due to the fact that they could not change their status as women. They may have adopted just such strategies of social change to defend their group activities from the stereotypically negative evaluation which they repeatedly received from the male outgroup. For instance, in the 'assimilation' strategy, they may have highlighted the important state-function their festival played in the public (male) arena. In a famous passage in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, the women speak proudly of their role in all the festivals and rites of transition which fall to them as women (638-47). They treat their ritual roles as absolutely central to the correct functioning of the male *polis*. This text can be understood if we accept that Aristophanes was reflecting the common female strategy of assimilating their roles into the male world to attain a more positive social identity for their group.

Or, using the strategy of 'social creativity', the women may have made a virtue of their sexual identity, reminding themselves and the men that they were the only ones who could give birth, and so their sex was a key element in securing the fertility of the land (cf. *Thesm.* 832-45). In the *parabasis* in *Thesmophoriazusae*, there is an extended plea by the female chorus to reassess the qualities of women and to remind men of such positive attributes of women which are lacking amongst men as being honest and

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Relations, ed. by Henri Tajfel (London: Academic Press, 1978), pp.27-60 (pp.53-58).

thrifty (*Thesm.* 810-29). Naturally, these words are Aristophanes', and the parodic nature of this part of the play is in evidence. It would be fascinating to know, however, whether Aristophanes was thematizing a contemporary feeling in his society, that women were conscious of their own specific qualities that differed from those of men. It is impossible, however, to know this.

Or, in 'social competition', the women may have compared themselves with other groups, such as slaves or *hetairai*, against whom they would hope to achieve a more positive distinctiveness. This is suggested by comments in Pseudo-Demosthenes about how respectable women would have been angry at the acquittal of Neaera, because she, as a slave and prostitute, was deemed worthy to share in public and religious ceremonials with the legitimate wives of citizens (59.111). This is clearly another male assumption of a female reaction, and moreover, employed to win a lawcourt case. It cannot, therefore be taken to represent directly the reaction of all high-status female groups to lower-status ones. It offers, rather, one possible reaction of some circles of women, who adopt social competition strategies.

A second possible application of the social identity of women advanced in recent feminist scholarship, which is useful to the study of the women celebrating the Demeter festivals, relates to the potentially different way in which women form their social identities.[37] A man's social identity tends to come about precisely through intergroup differentiation, comparison and competition, as is evinced frequently in social psychology research. This is called an 'agentic social identity'. It has been shown in psychological studies on women, however, that a woman's social identity is just as likely to develop through affiliation and attachment to the outgroup, as in competition

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[37]For the following theories, see Suzanne Skevington, 'A Place for Emotion in Social Identity Theory', in *The Social Identity of Women*, ed. by Suzanne Skevington and Deborah Baker (London: Sage, 1989), pp.40-58 (pp.48-52), which in turn is indebted to the work of J. A. Williams, 'Gender and Intergroup Behaviour: Towards an Integration', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 23 (1984), 311-16, whose terms, 'agentic' and 'communal', she claims, derive directly from the work of David Bakan, *The Duality of Existence: Isolation and Communion in Western Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966).

with it. This female version of social identity is called 'communal social identity'. The emotional (communal) aspects of intergroup relations are often overlooked because of the masculinist bias in contemporary studies in social identity which focus much more on the cognitive (agentic) aspects. At an individual level, women accord a higher degree of importance to affective aspects of their lives and value social relationships more highly than men, so it is not surprising that these particular values are also a prevailing influence in the intergroup relations of female-oriented groups.

Again here, although comedy can in no way be taken as a direct reflection of Athenian society, Aristophanes' three plays featuring female groups may be able to provide us with evidence of Aristophanes' perception of women, albeit in a somewhat exaggerated and distorted way. In these three plays, there is a distinct female mode of behaviour and discourse which is attributed to women (see Chapter 3). The playwright depicts women and men relating in very different ways, and women from opposing sides at war are shown to feel no intergroup animosity. This is comic fantasy, of course, but it cannot be denied that it is the women who are given the communal qualities which enable peace to be brokered. At one point in *Lysistrata*, the difference between male and female behaviour is directly referred to. The heroine asks the figure of 'Reconciliation' to take the Spartan delegates by the hand and lead them in a familiar, affectionate way (*οἰκείως*) way, as one would expect from women, rather than in an aggressive way, as is common practice amongst men (1116-18). This accords broadly with the differences shown between men and women by social psychologists in their formation of social identities.

Whether the women at the Thesmophoria responded to their male outgroups by negatively stereotyping them in an agentic way, or by attempting to bridge the gap in a communal way, it is hard to imagine that their behaviour would have included the kind of physical violence against any male outgroup intruders which is evoked in the stories. This violence remains the fantastical imagination of the excluded who feel curious, and rather anxious, about the women's activities, and perpetually negatively stereotype the celebrants.

It is possible to postulate a whole range of feelings for the women engaged in

the Thesmophoria, or indeed, in any other activity in a women-only context. It is difficult to find evidence in Classical literature to substantiate every hypothesis, but, for every insight offered above, I have attempted to give a suggestive reference in the Classical corpus. Even these references, however, are problematic because they are from male sources, and are not ultimately able to verify the suggested female reaction. Only the women themselves could do that. In the last part of this section, I offer several further possible female reactions to her Thesmophoria experiences, which are attested as typical group attitudes derived from the social identity perspective. I acknowledge that it is not necessarily possible to verify these suggestions with references to Classical literature or art. I offer them, however, as some examples of the female perspectives that become apparent, when we recognize that a great deal of social behaviour is fundamentally influenced by the social categories to which we belong. The importance of these insights lies in the fact that they offer a conceptualization of a more positive self-image and higher self-regard amongst Classical women than is usually suggested in scholarship concentrating on male constructions of the female perspective.

According to Hogg and Abrams, knowledge that one is part of a well-defined group reduces one's subjective uncertainty. One feels both verified and satisfied by the knowledge that there is a consensually recognized definition of who one is, how one should behave, and how one should treat others. This reduction of subjective uncertainty brings with it concomitant feelings of self-efficacy, power and control. Knowing that one belongs to a certain category is pleasing and elevates the mood. It improves feelings about the self and one's fellow group members.[38]

Such feelings due to group membership could be thought to apply to the women celebrating the Thesmophoria who would have felt a strong sense of identity with their group and pleasant feelings of belonging. Such pleasure would have brought with it a sense of self-regard and importance at both personal and group level. The

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[38]See Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, 'Towards a Single-Process Uncertainty-Reduction Model of Social Motivation in Groups', in Hogg and Abrams (n.33), pp.173-90 (p.185).

women would have felt that they were carrying out a task of great value for their community. Such women-only festivals, we can assume, would have thus been the site of a significant portion of a free-born woman's sense of self-esteem and regard.

We can also suggest that there existed a high level of group cohesiveness for women celebrating the Thesmophoria. Unlike the typical male view in literature of the female group's lack of cohesiveness, the Thesmophoria celebrants would have shown much solidarity, and conformity to group norms. For cohesiveness in groups has recently been theorized by social psychologists, with the help of the social identity approach, as not dependent on cases of idiosyncratic personal attraction amongst group members (interpersonal attraction), but rather on the more reliable depersonalized attraction to the prototype of the group embodied by each specific member (social attraction).[39] Group cohesiveness and solidarity does not, therefore, rely on fickle relationships between individuals, but is developed through an appreciation of, and attraction to, the group's prototypical characteristics or qualities embedded in its members.

Just as we have been charting the male group's ingroup favouritism and prejudice against female groups, it is possible that there existed a degree of ingroup favouritism and outgroup denigration occurring amongst the women of the Thesmophoria. The women may have speculated about the activities of other groups in their society, such as those of the men in the male-only Assembly. In Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae*, it is notable that the women plot to take over the running of the state at a women-only festival of Skira, presumably when they had discussed how badly the men were conducting affairs, that is, when they had negatively stereotyped the male outgroup (*Eccl.* 59). Although there is clearly a comic suggestion here that women on their own are likely to instigate all manner of trouble, it would not be too far-fetched to imagine that the context of a women-only festival provided women with the opportunity to talk about what was being done by the men in their political activities.

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[39]See Michael A. Hogg, *The Social Psychology of Group Cohesiveness: From Attraction to Social Identity* (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), pp.100, 108-09, 111, 151-52.

For although women were not allowed to attend the Assembly, they would undoubtedly have been aware, in general terms, of the policies adopted by Athens. The women were, after all, personally affected by those policies, for instance, when there were food shortages during the Peloponnesian War because of bans on interstate trading. In *Acharnians,* for example, Dicaeopolis sets up his own private market for all Peloponnesians, Megarians and Boeotians to trade with him, so that he can obtain such items as Boeotian eels, which he and his family had gone without for as long as six years (719ff, 881-94). Also, according to Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, the women of Greece were forced to put a stop to their husbands' aggressive war strategy, because they were losing all their sons in the fighting (*Lys.* 588-90). These sentiments, albeit in comedy, seem authentic and poignant. Women would have known of the damage to themselves and their families caused by the voting public's (men's) war policies. It would not be hard to imagine that both knowledge and criticisms of those policies were shared around in the context of such women-only activities as festivals.

If we accept that the women in the Thesmophoria perceived themselves as part of a female collective with a shared goal, these are just some of the possible attitudes of the female participants, whose view will, ultimately, of course, remain their own. As the field of social identity expands and becomes more nuanced, more of its insights could be applied to ancient material. As such, this work is merely an introduction to an area which could be drawn upon in much more depth to gain a greater understanding of the female perspective.

Conclusion

Research in the area of the group psychology of the women-only festivals offers a new way to consider the female experience of these festivals. There are two further avenues of study which could elucidate the female perspective of women-only activities by focusing on the dynamics of the female collective. The first is in the application of the social psychology of groups to other collective female activities in ancient Athens. For instance other female festivals could be studied, including other festivals for adults, like the less sanctioned Adonia, as well as rites of maturation for girls, such as those

at Brauron. The benefit of social identity is that it can be applied to small specific task-oriented groups, as in the case of festivals, as well as larger groups of religion, race, class, sexual identity or nationality. Other areas for group study could therefore include the female community which existed on a regular basis, to the exclusion of men, in such secular activities as birth and death rites, and the domestic activities which were the lot of women, such as water collection and weaving. Only recently has it been appreciated that such a rich variety of female group interaction existed in Classical Greece. Zaidman conceptualizes the female community as follows:

> The ritual community of women, which enjoyed institutional existence for only three days a year, during the Thesmophoria, existed on a smaller scale in all the major events affecting the oikos: marriage, birth, death. It also functioned in daily life, where the mistress of the household was assisted in her routine by daughters, female relatives, and serving women.[40]

The second avenue of study which may elucidate the female perspective of women-only activity is the comparative use of social anthropology (see Chapter 5). Contemporary societies with similar patterns of gender relations to the ancient world can provide analytical frameworks so that we can more easily piece together the meagre information we have about women's lives from the ancient world. This is not to propose a direct correlation between ancient and modern societies. But a cautious comparative study of sometimes similarly, sometimes differently, structured systems can provoke useful questions to ask of material from the ancient world. For instance, Herzfeld has discovered in modern Greece the creation of two separate communities when people associate exclusively with members of their own sex. He suggests that a group of modern Greek women can be the site of 'bawdy badinage' which disappears as soon as women come into contact with men, at which point a 'submissive, respectful

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[40]Zaidman (n6.2), p.370.

silence' returns.[41] Could this difference in behaviour have been a feature of ancient Greece, when men and women separated to pursue activities in a single-sex environment?

Through such methods as these, we may be able to make some tentative suggestions about the kind of experiences women were having in the context of the women-only Demeter festivals and in their other collective activities. When we speak of *the* female perspective of the festivals, it is, of course, not monolithic and discoverable through research. The view of the female participants would have been varied. This term is used, rather, to convey the likely responses of some women to their festival experiences, due to their membership of a cohesive group. The 'corporate sentiment' which, up until now, has been attributed to the women of fifth-century Athens with very little evidence to substantiate it, can hereafter be maintained, through social identity theory, with much stronger conviction.[42]

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[41]Michael Herzfeld, 'Silence, Submission, and Subversion: Toward a Poetics of Womanhood', in *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece,* ed. by Peter Loizos and Euthymios Papataxiarchis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp.79-97 (p.95).

[42]This expression is from Parke (n6.2), p.188.

Chapter 5
Female Group Activity in Fifth-Century Athens

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I considered the problem of attaining any knowledge of the female perceptions and experiences of the women-only festivals in ancient Greece. With the help of insights from social identity theory derived from social psychology, however, an attempt was made to suggest what may have constituted the experiences of the women at the widespread women-only festivals of the Thesmophoria. These female experiences differed vastly from the male perceptions of the festival as elaborated in the exaggerated stories surrounding the annual event. At the end of the last chapter, I suggested that it was not only in the context of religious gatherings that women found an exclusively female environment from which they both benefited and derived great enjoyment. For there existed many other female group activities, both religious and secular, in which women came together and experienced their identity as a cohesive group. The existence of this exclusive women's world, which was known to men, and yet excluded them, may have been one of the contributing factors to the male-dominated culture's preoccupation with the female group and the creation of the many negative stereotypes of it that we see in literature.

In this chapter, I offer a picture of an elaborate and vast system of female interaction and group activity in the daily lives of free-born women in Athens. This activity encompassed such events as birth and wedding celebrations, funeral ceremonials, shared chores, economic exchange in the markets, and visiting networks. Scholarship has not yet accepted that such vibrant interaction among women was a regular occurrence in the life of the Classical city. In general, Classical scholars have retained hypotheses about women and their freedoms, that rely upon the female leading a relatively secluded existence in the *oikos,* and being debarred from public

activities.[1] This assumption is made partly because ancient female activity is not as well attested as male activity, but also because of an intransigent bias in the perspective of contemporary western civilization. According to this western view, only male politico-economic activity is regarded as exemplary of authentic public activity. The kind of female occasions mentioned above have not often warranted the attention of scholars investigating the 'public' world, because the activities carried out by women are often perceived as, by definition, private. Because female interaction primarily goes on in, or around, the home, and may be less structured than the events going on in public spaces, it is excluded from the lists of public activities worthy of investigation. And it is not even considered proper 'social activity' in the sense of being part of a woman's social life.[2]

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[1]See examples of this even amongst those Classicists who focus in quite innovative ways on gender issues. For instance, Ruth Padel, 'Women: Model for Possession by Greek Daemons' in *Images of Women in Antiquity,* ed. by Averil Cameron and Amélie Kuhrt, rev. edn (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.3-19 (p.8); Eva Cantarella, *Pandora's Daughters: The Role and Status of Women in Greek and Roman Antiquity,* trans. by Maureen B. Fant (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), p.46; Froma I. Zeitlin, 'Cultic Models of the Female: Rites of Dionysus and Demeter', *Arethusa,* 15, (1982), 129-57 (p.129); Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens*, 2nd edn (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1993), e.g. pp.86-88, 108-10; and Sue Blundell, *Women in Classical Athens* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1998), pp.10, 58, 72

[2]An exception to this general rule is the area of women and religion which has recently attracted a great deal of attention. See Bella Zweig on the bias in the western tradition, and the critics she lists as notable exceptions who highlight the *public* importance of women engaged in state religious activities: Calame (1977), Burkert (1985), Winkler (1990), pp.188-209, Lincoln (1981), and Hirshon (1978). For further details, see 'The Primal Mind: Using Native American Models for the Study of Women in Ancient Greece', in *Feminist Theory and the Classics,* ed. by Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and Amy Richlin (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), pp.145-80 (p.146). Jill Dubisch notes the androcentric bias in our very definition of 'political', which precludes women who are not considered political actors. See Jill Dubisch, 'Introduction', in *Gender and Power in Rural Greece*, ed. by Jill Dubisch (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp.3-41 (p.24). According to Peggy Reeves Sanday, a similar bias is apparent in our understanding of the definition of power. For us, it is difficult to locate the concept of power anywhere other than in the politico-jural domain. This kind of power must be seen, rather, as culturally specific, and only one sort of

Rather than drawing on social psychology again to elucidate these female groups, this elaborate pattern of female shared activity is investigated, this time, with the help of a different theoretical framework, namely modern social anthropology. Studies of societies that have fundamental similarities with ancient Greece in certain social structures, especially relating to their gender systems, can be considered comparatively to help us understand the ancient world. Such comparative work would not be possible if it had not been for the sustained attempts of David Cohen to legitimize the use of modern material to help in the quest to elucidate ancient societies for which we have much less direct evidence.[3]

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part justifies the use of modern

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power. For power is accorded whichever sex is thought to embody the forces upon which people rely for their perceived needs. See Peggy Reeves Sanday, *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.11.

[3]Key works in which David Cohen explains his comparative approach are 'Seclusion, Separation, and the Status of Women in Classical Athens', *G&R*, 36 (1989), 3-15; 'The Social Context of Adultery at Athens', in *Nomos: Essays in Athenian Law, Politics and Society*, ed. by Paul Cartledge, Paul Millett, Stephen Todd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp.147-65; and *Law, Sexuality, and Society: The Enforcement of Morals in Classical Athens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). Compare the critical response to Cohen's perceived 'lack of precision' in Mark Golden's work. Criticisms about the false continuity from ancient to modern Greece, and the blind homogenization of the Mediterranean basin, however, are not fairly levelled at Cohen's work (see p.227 here). See Mark Golden, 'The Uses of Cross-Cultural Comparison in Ancient Social History', *EMC*, 36, n.s. 11 (1992), 309-31 (pp.319-22). See criticisms also from Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood on the radical difference of the position of women vis-à-vis religion in Classical Athens and modern Greece, which, in her view, undermines the whole enterprise of Cohen's comparative work concerning women. Cohen, however, nowhere claims that all areas of Classical Athens need to map directly onto modern Mediterranean societies for the latter to be a useful paradigm. There are clearly fundamental differences between the two in areas of religion, law and economics. These differences should not invalidate using modern comparative studies, since both differences and likenesses can be equally useful in raising unasked questions of the ancient material. See Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, 'Male and Female, Public and Private, Ancient and Modern', in *Pandora: Women in Classical Greece*, ed. by Ellen D. Reeder (Baltimore: The Walters Art Gallery; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), pp.111-20 (pp.111-12).

social anthropology as a comparative tool that can help us understand the female networks, which were a feature of every day life in the fifth century in ancient Athens.[4] In this part of the chapter I also explain the central theoretical insights from contemporary anthropology that can help us approach the study of women in ancient societies.

In the second part, evidence for various female joint activities is collected. Included in this evidence is a range of religious and secular celebrations and gatherings; a variety of shared domestic chores and wage labour, carried out by groups of free-born women both inside and outside the house; and an elaborate pattern of visiting amongst women. Much of the evidence for this study derives from Classical Athens, and my insights, therefore, only refer to Athenian society, but a similar model of female group activity could be assumed for all *poleis* in Classical Greece, in which a similar system of sexual segregation was in operation.

These activities are viewed in the comparative light of material from contemporary societies in which a similar gender system is in operation. From this investigation, we can see that a vast amount of daily female interaction and activity has been ignored in Classical scholarship. This vision of women as frequently gathering for shared activities could be yet another way to explain why, in a society in which women were meant to be kept apart, there was such a fascination and unease about women's interaction recorded in the art and literature of the period (see Chapters 1, 2, 4).

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[4]The term 'woman network' (which I have adapted here to 'female networks'), was coined by Vanessa Maher, and has now become a common term in social anthropology. It describes women engaging in a series of relationships with other women which assure them help and support on a daily basis. Such associations amongst women are typical of many politically deprived social groups, where the group, on the whole, lacks economic autonomy and is segregated. See Vanessa Maher, 'Kin, Clients and Accomplices: Relationships Among Women in Morocco', in *Sexual Divisions and Society: Process and Change*, ed. by Diana Leonard Barker and Sheila Allen (London: Tavistock Publications, 1976), pp.52-75 (pp.52-53).

Part 1

Social anthropology: a comparative approach

Cohen has set out in great detail how the application of insights from contemporary social anthropology to studies of the ancient world is not only justified, but offers a useful perspective. Before using anthropological models to help understand the female networks of ancient Athens, however, it would be worth considering the most important arguments that justify such an approach.

Cohen establishes that both the modern Mediterranean and several other contemporary cultures share a common social structure in certain respects with Classical Athens. He calls these societies 'face-to-face'.[5] The three elements which characterize 'face-to-face' societies are: first, the societies adhere to the politics of reputation, including the complementary opposition of honour and shame. Rather than judging oneself and others by inner moral states, one makes an assessment according to how closely one's external behaviour conforms to expected normative standards. One way in which men preserve their reputation is by closely monitoring the sexual integrity of the women in their families, and allowing no scandal to be spread about them (p.36). Second, the system of gender division in the societies includes the complementary opposition of male and female with regard to labour, social roles, family, and sexual roles. And third, there is a system of spatial differentiation, including the complementary opposition of public and private (Cohen, pp.36-37).

The abundant evidence about the lives of women from contemporary societies, which have similar patterns of social organization with regard to sexuality and the family to ancient Athens, can be used to furnish us with an analytical framework. Using this analytical model, we can reconstruct and understand the isolated scraps of information about women's lives from the ancient world. This is not to say that Classical Athens was *the same* as modern traditional Mediterranean societies, but different models from the Mediterranean may be able to prompt us into asking the

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[5]For this, and the following assertions, page references are given in the text to Cohen, *Law, Sexuality, and Society* (n.3), unless otherwise stated.

salient questions of our ancient material so that we gain a fuller picture of women's lives (Cohen, p.10).[6]

Two objections have been frequently levied about such a project, which Cohen satisfactorily counters in his book (pp.38-40). First, criticism is made of comparative anthropological analyses between ancient and modern Greece because the assumption is made that such a project relies on the historical continuity between the ancient and modern Mediterranean. This primitive assumption has been made by some who have compared cultures, but is quite rightly avoided by Cohen.[7] The second accusation of the comparative anthropological approach is that, in order for the Mediterranean to be used in comparative studies with the ancient world, the Mediterranean is commonly reduced to an homogeneous area with no cultural distinctions between nations. Cohen denies that he is blind to the differences between Mediterranean cultures, and that, by not accounting for intercultural differences, he has created by reductionism a 'homo mediterraneus'. Some patterns of social practices do indeed characterize a wide range of Mediterranean communities. Whilst there may be considerable variations in the patterns, the underlying normative structures remain the same.[8]

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[6]See also Cohen, *Seclusion* (n.3), p.13.

[7]For instance, P. Walcot suggests a direct continuity between ancient and modern Greece, in *Greek Peasants, Ancient and Modern: A Comparison of Social and Moral Values* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1970), pp.10, 119.

[8]John Winkler has drawn on similar comparative anthropological material as Cohen, and is equally keen to stress the benefits of using modern data if applied with great caution: 'But let me make very clear that the issue of continuity between ancient Greek and modern Greek culture is a red herring. It is not that cultural ways have survived intact and can be taken as evidence for ancient life. [...] It is simply the case that certain deep premises (protocols) about social life, widely shared and with very significant variations around the Mediterranean basin, can be used to frame and illuminate ancient texts, bringing out their unspoken assumptions'. See John J. Winkler, 'Introduction', in *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*, by John J. Winkler (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), pp.1-13 (p.10). See also Sally Humphreys, who, even in the seventies, asserted the legitimacy of using modern comparisons to elucidate ancient Greece, by saying: 'We do not compare "societies", we compare ideal types or models of institutions and social forms'.

Four tenets of Cohen's work prove to be particularly useful to my study, which attempts to prove the relative freedom of Classical women to mix with each other and leave the house more frequently than has hitherto been presumed.[9]

(1) Cultural ideal versus social reality

First, it is important when studying the lives of ancient women to differentiate between texts that dictate how the society ought to act, or propose a cultural ideal, and texts that show how society does act, or reflect social reality. Cohen explains that, earlier in this century, anthropologists formulated an inflexible view of Mediterranean woman as secluded, powerless and isolated from the life of her society. This view of Mediterranean woman resulted from the fact that most anthropologists until the middle of this century were men, so could not easily observe living female informants, and only heard about women's lives in reports of husbands, fathers and brothers. Over and above the lack of direct observation of women, the anthropologists, in general, failed to appreciate that any informant's account about his/her society would be an unconscious or conscious manipulation of norms and cultural ideals to convey a particular image of the society to the anthropologist.

The widely accepted view of secluded women was challenged by a later generation of anthropologists. The pioneering article of Ernestine Friedl persuaded anthropologists that there was more to women's lives than could be attained in informants' carefully stylized accounts (Cohen, pp.135-36).[10]

See S. C. Humphreys, *Anthropology and the Greeks* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp.12-13.

[9]All the following page references cite Cohen, *Law, Sexuality and Society* (n.3), unless otherwise stated.

[10]Ernestine Friedl, 'The Position of Women: Appearance and Reality', *AQ*, 40 (1967), 97-108; reprinted as above in Dubisch (n.2), pp.42-52. It was only with the Ardeners' theoretical insight of the 'muted-group' that anthropologists became aware of the potential of a second point of view in any one society. This muted voice may differ radically from the dominant view, but is less publicly aired. See Shirley Ardener, 'Introduction', in *Perceiving Women*, ed by Shirley Ardener (London: Malaby Press,

Cohen accuses Classical scholars of making the same mistake, and of failing to distinguish between, on the one hand, ideals and desired social goals, as found in such documents as law court speeches and treatises on how to run a household as in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, and on the other, actual social practices. Normative ideals are mistakenly taken as examples of real behaviour, rather than 'official representations of practice' (Cohen, pp.136-37).[11] For instance, such normative judgements of women's behaviour as that found in Lysias 3.6, explaining how women are ashamed to be seen even by their kin, are remarkably similar to statements made about gender relations throughout the modern Mediterranean. Writing an ethnography of the Italian village of Pisticci, Davis reported that when he entered the houses of several different village men, he was told each time that he was the first man who was not kin to cross their thresholds. As Davis had been aware of other men entering the houses, this expression clearly did not reflect reality, but was rather an expression of a cultural ideal (Cohen, p.148).[12]

Another example of the gap between social reality and ideals, showing that this phenomenon is not restricted to the Mediterranean, may be found in the study of Williams of the Lebanese village of Haouch reported by Cohen (p.162). Here, mothers constantly said of their daughters that they never went out: 'We are here in the house and we have nothing to do with anyone; we stay in the house and just see our neighbours'.[13] As Williams points out, this statement contains some strange

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1975), pp.vii-xxiii (pp.xi-xvii); Edwin Ardener, 'Belief and the Problem of Women', in Ardener above (pp.1-17); and Edwin Ardener, 'The "Problem" Revisited', in Ardener above (pp.19-27).

[11]Cohen here quotes from Pierre Bourdieu who coined the term in his *Outline of a Theory of Practice,* trans. by Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), Chapter 1.

[12]J. Davis, *Land and Family in Pisticci* (London and New York: Athlone Press, 1973), pp.48-49.

[13]Judith R. Williams, *The Youth of Haouch el Harimi: A Lebanese Village* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp.76-77.

contradictions, where 'neighbours' do not apparently constitute 'anyone', and staying inside seems to encompass also visiting neighbours. In this case, the statement of never leaving, in reality, means not leaving the house without a specific purpose regarded as legitimate in the eyes of the community, such as going to the fountain, visiting a neighbour, or working in the fields (Cohen, p.163). These kinds of legitimate excuses for women to leave the house are reminiscent of the kinds of reasons women give in Aristophanes' comedies for not being in the house when their husbands come home, such as helping at a birth (*Eccl.* 528-29). And indeed, Cohen considers comedy, as a genre, more representative of the daily life of Classical society, than the idealized version delivered by Xenophon and others (Cohen, *Seclusion* (n.3), p.12). With great acumen and succinctness, Cohen concludes for Classical Athens what is surely correct: 'Athenian maidens never saw males who were not close relatives, in the same way that the girls of Haouch never the left the house' (p.165).[14]

It is possible to add yet further credibility to Cohen's hypothesis that works which prescribe societal behaviour do not necessarily equate to the behaviour of society, with two further considerations. First, we can compare the principles established by Julia Leslie from her work on the Hindu text of the *Strīdharmapaddhati.* This text is an eighteenth-century compilation of writings from Antiquity. It comprises a guide to the religious status and duties of Indian women. Leslie notes that the text is a mixture of prohibitions and injunctions. According to a basic principle in 'mīmāmsa' philosophy, something can only be prohibited if its occurrence is possible. Thus a prohibition only comes into being if someone is actually doing what is prohibited. When, therefore, women are prohibited from wearing certain

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[14]A very similar differentiation, between the protocols of a society and how the society actually behaved, is made by Winkler. He describes the Classicist's project as the following: 'We must attempt to see through and beyond social prescriptions to that usually unspoken fund of knowledge about their application, their bending, their observance "in the breach", and the hidden agendas they sometimes concealed'. See John J. Winkler, 'Laying Down the Law: The Oversight of Men's Sexual Behaviour in Classical Athens', in *Before Sexuality: The Construction of Erotic Experience in the Ancient World,* ed. by David M. Halperin, John. J. Winkler and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp.171-209 (p.176).

blouses during the day or heavy earrings during love-making, it may imply that some women in fact were doing precisely these things.[15] This example may help us to view ancient prescriptive texts with a more open mind. In Classical rhetoric, women were continually enjoined to lead a life inside the house, potentially because they were not doing so (e.g. Xen. *Oec.* 7.23, 30,[Arist.] *Oec.* 1.3-4, 1343b4ff).

A second consideration supports the disjunction between societal prescriptions about female behaviour and their actual behaviour in ancient Athens. It is clear from Aristophanes' comments concerning the husbands who are paranoid about their wives' behaviour, that the men did not act on the conviction that their wives spent their whole day locked up at home demurely avoiding the gaze of men who were not kin. On the contrary, the men who were out all day, did not know what their wives were doing, and they suspected that all was not as calm and ordered as the ideals would suggest (Ar. *Thesm.* 395-428, 789-99). Admittedly, as all evidence derived from Aristophanes about women's lives by definition comically distorts the truth, it must be treated with caution. For the joke about suspicious husbands and less than trustworthy wives to be effective, however, there must have been a point to the comic trope to be recognized by the audience.

(2) The public versus the private world

A commonplace assumption about both ancient and modern Mediterranean societies

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[15]Julia Leslie, 'Recycling Ancient Material: An Orthodox View of Hindu Women', in *Women in Ancient Societies: An Illusion of the Night,* ed. by Léonie J. Archer, Susan Fischler and Maria Wyke (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), pp.233-51 (p.249). See also Harrianne Mills who investigates the many clothing regulations from the Classical period specifically restricting women's dress, and the stricter penalties meted out to women if the regulations were contravened. She concludes that the greater penalties for women indicate either a greater concern for women's clothing rather than men's, or more difficulty in attaining compliance from the women. See Harrianne Mills, 'Greek Clothing Regulations: Sacred and Profane?', *ZPE,* 55 (1984), 255-65 (p.261). See also Susan Guettel Cole, '*Gynaiki ou Themis*: Gender Difference in the Greek *Leges Sacrae*', *Helios,* 19 (1992), 104-22, and Bille-Jean Garland, '*Gynaikonomoi:* An Investigation of Greek Censors of Women' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1981).

is that there is a gender-related dichotomization of inside and outside. Women are related to the house and private sphere (the inside) and men to the public world (the outside). The *locus classicus* for this division of spheres is the Homeric injunction from Hector to Andromache in book 6 of the *Iliad* to go inside and concern herself with her loom and distaff, as war is a job for men (*Il.* 6.490-93). This programmatic statement echoes in both direct quotation and allusion throughout the Classical period (Ar. *Lys.* 520, Xen. *Oec.* 7.23, 30, [Arist.] *Oec.*, 1.3-4, 1343b4ff). The injunction for women to stay inside reveals something of the culturally inscribed concerns of the sexes, but it is wholly wrong to assume that the opposition outside-inside matches directly the oppositions male-female and public-private. These categories are relative rather than absolute, and should be said to stand in complementary, instead of binary opposition to one another (Cohen, p.74). For women do sometimes move and work outside the house and have important roles in public events, and men are associated with the house and family in equally important ways.[16]

Cohen describes for the modern Mediterranean one of the many important ways in which women have a key role in the public world. A man's reputation is primarily based on the sexual behaviour of his wife, female children and relations.

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[16]See the three recent anthropological collections of Collier and Yanagisako, MacCormack and Strathern, and Ortner and Whitehead, who criticize the way the West, including western anthropologists, sees the distinction between the politico-jural (public) and domestic (private) domains as absolute, and that women only belong to the latter. They should be viewed rather as completely mutually dependant and pervasive. All three works have called for the need to re-evaluate such structural opposites as nature/ culture, domestic/politico-jural, and even female/male in any society studied, because these opposites, far from being universals, are culture-dependent. See Sylvia Junko Yanagisako and Jane Fishburne Collier, 'Toward a Unified Analysis of Gender and Kinship', in *Gender and Kinship: Essays Toward a Unified Analysis,* ed. by Jane Fishburne Collier and Sylvia Junko Yanagisako (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987), pp.14-50, (pp.16-20); Carol P. MacCormack, 'Nature, Culture and Gender: A Critique', in *Nature, Culture and Gender*, ed. by Carol P. MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), pp.1-24 (pp.5-11, 21); and Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, 'Introduction: Accounting for Sexual Meanings', in *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality,* ed. by Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp.1-27 (pp.1-2).

Knowledge of women's behaviour is filtered to the male world through women passing on to their husbands the facts they have heard in gossiping female networks located in the close neighbourhood. This scrutiny of, and information about, women's lives filtered to the male world from the female world connects the spatial category of the neighbourhood and the private female world with the social, moral and hence public realms (Cohen, p.51).[17]

In the same way, in ancient Athens, a man's public reputation was affected by rumours circulating in the neighbourhood which were filtered back to him by women. For instance, Aristotle in *Politics* 1313b32-35 asserts that, in a radical democracy, women rule the home and carry abroad reports about men. In Demosthenes, one woman visiting her friend next door imparts to her son what she had seen and heard in the neighbour's house. This information thus furnishes her son with evidence in a lawcourt to defend himself against the accusations of his neighbour (Dem. 55.23-24). We see another suggestion of the power of female rumour, albeit in the dramatic form of tragedy, when Alcestis assumes that a stepmother would spread rumours about her adopted children and thereby ruin the chance of a good marriage for her daughter (Eur. *Alc.* 315-16). Thus Classical female society, considered nothing to do with the public world, does indeed have a profound effect on public reputations.[18]

An important corollary of seeing a strict demarcation between public and private along gender lines has led to a confusion concerning the social practice of 'female separation'. Because women have been considered both in the ancient and

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[17]On the theme of the power of female gossip and rumour, see Margery Wolf, *Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972), pp.32-52 (especially pp.37-40).

[18]The most central way in which a woman in Classical Athens would have access to 'public' power through knowledge of a 'private' matter was through the intimate knowledge of the paternity of her children; a knowledge which belonged uniquely to her. The withholding of this knowledge could have significant repercussions. For a man faced penalties for presenting a child to his phratry as his legitimate offspring, when he was not ([Dem.] 59.13, 59-61, 63, 118, 122). The penalties were also strict for marrying his daughter, as a free-born woman, to an Athenian husband, when she was not ([Dem.] 59.50, 53-54, 110, 118).

modern Mediterranean to be attached primarily to the private sphere of the house, they have thus been thought to live in physical sequestration, only seeing their slaves and family. The assumption that women are closely associated with the house, however, need not imply that women are confined within its physical boundaries in utter seclusion. The longstanding equation of segregation with seclusion in both early anthropology and Classical studies has meant that a large body of evidence about activities which took women out of their houses in Classical times has been overlooked (Cohen, p.150).

Cohen lists over twenty anthropological texts dating from the late sixties to the late eighties which cover several Mediterranean countries and beyond. Studies of all these countries show that separation of women in a society's gender system by no means equates to seclusion and a lack of a public existence for women (Cohen, p.158, n.103).

(3) The socio-economic position of women

A third insight which can be usefully drawn from modern social anthropology to investigate the lives of women in ancient Athens is the necessity to distinguish the social class of the women whose lives are being studied. It is also important to consider whether the woman dwells in an urban or rural environment, which would create a significant difference in her daily activities, and thus alter her ability to make contact with friends (Dem. 55.23-24).[19] From modern anthropology, it is clear that a

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[19]Walter Scheidel notes the lack of interest in Classical scholarship, even in gender studies, on the lives of rural women in the ancient world. He describes many cultures such as the Near East, medieval Europe, and the colonial and post-colonial Americas, where there existed a wide gap historically between ideological claims in the society and rural practices. Where the literatures of these cultures are full of references to women as well-guarded matrons confined to the home, and agricultural work is viewed as the exclusive domain of men, the reality of the society is quite the opposite. In rural areas women are required to work outside the home just as much as men. His material forms an interesting parallel for the rural areas in Classical Greece. See Walter Scheidel, 'The Most Silent Women of Greece and Rome: Rural Labour and Women's Life in the Ancient World (I)', *G&R*, 42 (1995), 202-17 (pp.208-10).

woman's freedom of movement generally varies with her contribution to the household income. The more a woman's labour is required outside the house, that is, the poorer the family, the greater the woman's mobility (Cohen, p.151). This simple fact is demonstrated by many ethnographies of the Mediterranean and elsewhere listed by Cohen (p.151, n.75).

In her analysis of Arab society, Tucker provides a good example of this divergence between social ideal and everyday practicality. For her, it is vital to take the difference between the situation of the upper class and the lower class into account when dealing with questions of gender symbolism. A poor rural household could not afford provisions for a *harim* (separate women's quarters), which is the social ideal for women. And due to economic necessity, lower-class women are required to work as petty traders, craftswomen, seamstresses and midwives.[20] We have proof that the same situation existed in ancient Athens. For although a society may ideally desire its women to be kept inside, economic necessity may demand that the women help bring money into the home.

Aristotle commented that it is impossible to prevent the wives of the poor going out of doors in a democracy (presumably to work, amongst other things) (*Pol.* 1300a6-7). Indeed, as we see in the second part of the paper (pp.247-55), there is ample proof that women were engaged in employment in a variety of different capacities. This work included labour in the fields, petty trading in the markets, midwifery, and nursing. Cohen sees this labour of women as a typical pattern for a poor region like the Mediterranean, where most families could not manage without the help of their women and children (p.151).[21] This fact must reorient our discussion of

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[20]Judith E. Tucker, 'Introduction', in *Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers,* ed. by Judith E. Tucker (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp.vii-xvii (p.xv), and also in above, Judith E. Tucker, 'The Arab Family in History: "Otherness" and the Study of the Family', pp.195-207 (pp.200, 203-05).

[21]Important collections of the economic activities of women in the ancient world are the 1922 book by Pieter Herfst, *Le Travail de la femme dans la Grèce ancienne* (Utrecht: Oosthoek, 1922), and the more recent Roger Brock, 'The Labour of Women in Classical Athens', *CQ,* 44 (1994), 336-46.

the role of women in Classical Athens. To depict most women remaining in seclusion and not engaging in economic activity outside the house at all, characterizes a very small percentage of women, as Cohen points out (p.150). When we discuss 'women' in Classical Antiquity, this term can either refer to the lower-class less secluded women who would have to work, or the wealthier women in the minority, who did not. Classical scholarship adopts a skewed view of Athenian women when it only admits the lives of upper-class women, as idealized in Xenophon's vision of a gentry slave-owning household in *Oeconomicus,* the master of which is Ischomachus, one of the élite, *καλός τε κάγαθός* (Xen. *Oec.* 6.12).[22]

It is extremely uncertain how many families in Classical Athens, let alone elsewhere, were wealthy enough to be in the position to allow their women to stay in the house. To begin with, it is not known how many families owned land and slaves. Even if we follow Fisher's view, which he admits is on the 'maximalist' side, that most, if not all, hoplite farming households owned one or two slaves for much of the time, and a few of the more wealthy *thētēs* households had one or two slaves for a part of the year, this does not allow us to assume that women did not work in these households. And this is to say nothing of all the poorer citizen households, which

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[22]As well as differentiating women in terms of wealth and social status, it is, of course, of central importance, when thinking about women in relation to the daily activities they engaged in and their potential freedoms, to consider the differences in their age. Women are not all alike and will not have been treated by one set of social rules. As Bremmer has amply demonstrated, older, post-menopausal women, were allowed greater freedom of movement than younger women, because they no longer constituted a threat to the reputation of the male household. There was no longer any chance that a sexual indiscretion would result in an illegitimate birth. Older women are likely to have given birth already to children who would have been proclaimed legitimate and thus able to inherit the family wealth, and so the pressure on them is alleviated (cf. Lys. 1.6, however, on the relative freedoms given to a young woman after the birth of just one child). According to an anecdotal Hyperides' (389-322 BC) fragment, a woman who travels outside the house should be of such an age that onlookers do not ask whose wife she is, but whose mother (fr.205). Bremmer also suggests that it was older women who were most often described in the role of vendor in the market and nurse. See Jan N. Bremmer, 'The Old Women of Ancient Greece', in *Sexual Asymmetry: Studies in Ancient Society,* ed. by Josine Blok and Peter Mason (Amsterdam: Gieben, 1987), pp.191-215 (pp.192-94, 197).

could not afford slaves.[23] It would be more prudent to accept a different proposition by Fisher that slave-holding was certainly regarded as a most desirable feature of freedom and citizenship in Athens, but that reality did not match the ideal (Fisher, pp.46-47). It may have been the case that some Athenian families were so wealthy that their wives could stay at home and not engage in economic affairs. Even if this were the case, these women could still have been engaged in activities outside the house. For instance, it is precisely the high-status women who would have felt they had a role to play in the public festivals of the city, such as the Thesmophoria, and indeed, they probably took a leading part in them (Isae. 8.19-20, 3.80, Ar. *Thesm.* 832-45).[24]

(4) Historical factors affecting the position of women

Gendered meanings are not stable concepts, but are affected by changing times as well as such changing social conditions as urbanization. Cohen draws attention to the way women's roles change when men are away from home doing migrant work. He cites the work of Sweet on the Lebanon to show the necessary increased economic input of women when their husbands are absent for long stretches (Cohen, p.151).[25]

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[23]N. R. E. Fisher, *Slavery in Classical Greece* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1995), p.46. Compare also Fisher's 1976 edited volume in which he suggests that there were two categories of citizen in the Athenian democracy: the *plousioi* (rich) and the *penētes* (poor). The latter category was by far the largest, and included some groups who might have been considered relatively affluent by others, because they may have had to pay the special war tax (*eisphora*), but not the 'super-tax' (*leitourgia*). This latter tax was reserved for the élite and paid for important community services. The crucial distinction between the two groups was that the poor had to work for their living and the wealthy did not. See N. R. E. Fisher, *Social Values in Classical Athens* (London: Dent; Toronto: Hakkert, 1976), p.24ff.

[24]As has been already mentioned, my study is primarily aimed at developing an understanding of the situation of married free-born women in Classical Athens, rather than that of slave women or *hetairai.* The daily existence of the latter categories would have differed, in certain respects, from the lives of free-born women.

[25]Louise E. Sweet, 'The Women of Ain ad Dair', *AQ*, 40 (1967), 167-83 (p.175). A similar insight is reached by Peggy Reeves Sanday (n.2), pp.120-24, who states that when men are absent for long periods, engaged either in warfare, hunting, trade, or

An important change affecting much of Greece during the Classical period was the Peloponnesian War, which is little cited as a potentially vital element in gender definition at this time. First, there would have undoubtedly been much disruption and confusion to any existing gender/space demarcations, when those living in rural areas outside Athens were evacuated into the cramped city to avoid the Spartan attacks which were targeted at the Attic countryside. If there were indeed different norms for rural and city-dwelling women, as seems likely considering the different lifestyles dictated by such divergent modes of subsistence, and rural women were accustomed to being outside much more than urban women due to their agricultural work, the female evacuees would not have been content to stay indoors. They may not have even had the opportunity to stay indoors. The circumstances in the city would have been, by necessity, greatly altered through the displacement of people from their own homes. So in a very short space of time, the public spaces of Athens may have undergone a radical change, with women in public view as much as men.

Second, and more importantly, whilst men were absent on campaign, women must have been forced to take over much more 'public' roles to cover the deficit in manpower. According to Demosthenes, the Peloponnesian War forced women of citizen status to enter paid employment as wet-nurses, wool-workers and grape-gatherers at harvest time (Dem. 57.45). In Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Socrates persuades Aristarchus to put his household of fourteen sisters, nieces and cousins to work at looms in the economic crisis at the end of the Peloponnesian War, even though they were all respectable and free-born (*Mem.* 1.7). The female garland-seller in *Thesmophoriazusae* claims she had to go to the market to sell plaited garlands to keep herself and her children alive in the absence and subsequent death of her husband in Cyprus (443ff). Admittedly, such evidence from comedy again must be carefully scrutinized, but the point is well made by the simple fact that in war, certain gender-role differences must collapse to ensure the successful daily running of the homeland.

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migrant labour, women become responsible for the local affairs and the economic success of their families, and discover a self-sufficiency which was previously absent.

This fact has significant implications for gender-role development and women's freedoms during the Classical period, which have been hitherto overlooked.

These four points highlight the areas in which we benefit by introducing issues from modern social anthropology into the study of a past culture. Anthropology is a tool used to uncover the kind of questions which we may otherwise leave completely unasked, because of our own ethnocentric blindness. To ask such questions is vital to gain a clearer understanding of the position of women in Classical Greece. In the second part of the chapter, I adopt, and further develop, the important insights derived by Cohen about women in Classical Athens from his use of modern social anthropology. I consider here some of the areas in which free-born women in ancient Athens gathered together, both to attend ceremonies, to do chores and to participate in social networks.

Part 2

Women's collective activities in Classical Athens

(1) Ceremonial activities

Although religious festivals were a key area in which women had an important degree of autonomy in the Classical world, little will be said on this topic here. The kind of experiences women had in the festival context, as exemplified by the key festival of Thesmophoria, were discussed at length in Chapter 4. Rather, it is appropriate here to draw attention to the vast number of festival activities which were open to women from pre-adolescence through to motherhood. This continuity of ritual activity, which was carried out outside the house, in the company of other women, or both men and women, was a central expectation of a woman's life. Beyond the official purposes for the ritual gathering, however, festivals offered the site of autonomous female activity, which at its most basic, constituted, as Chapter 4 showed, the interaction and enjoyment of women as a group.

Religious festivals

Cohen notes that when women organized and travelled to the Thesmophoria

celebrations, where they stayed for three days and nights away from their husbands and their homes, they were certainly not inhibited by the social protocols to remain at home. Moreover, he sees in their ability to organize the festivals, to elect officials and a governing council of women; to manage supplies and finances; and to travel to the events (as seen in Isae. 8.19-20), a degree of organization in the female community which would not have been possible, unless we conceive of women as acting in a much more collective way.[26] Whether the women did actually organize all the parts of the festival which Cohen suggests is debatable. It is quite obvious, however, that the purpose of the festivals was not purely to honour the specific divinity. Female interaction and enjoyment is presupposed by such activities. According to Plato in his *Laws,* one function of the festivals and sacrifices attended by citizens, was 'so that people may meet in friendship [...] and become familiar and acquainted with one another' (*Leg.* 738d7f). If gathering together at these events was thought to promote friendship among men, it can hardly have been a different situation for women attending their own festivals.

There is much evidence that girls in Athens would have been expected to take part in rites of passage between pre-adolescence and the time for marriage. It is difficult for us to know how many girls took part in some of the activities, but clearly, in certain cases, a few girls were selected to represent their contemporaries. The classic account of a privileged ritual upbringing is given by the chorus in *Lysistrata,* which speaks of young women taking part in the Arrephoria at seven, then being *aletrides* (grinders of corn). They took part in the festival of Arkteia at Brauron at ten, and then acted as *kanēphoroi* (basket bearers) in ritual processions (642-47). The text here is disputed and there is much controversy over whether this could be at all representative of the rites in which a single girl would have been expected to participate. Because of the discrepancy in some of the details of age, it is thought that this is rather a compilation of various ritual activities in which girls may have been involved. For example, although the Arrephoria and Kanephoria were restricted to a

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[26]Cohen, *Law, Sexuality, and Society* (n.3), p.152.

small number of girls only of noble families, it is thought that the Arkteia, held every four years at Brauron, should have been attended by every Athenian girl before marriage.[27]

We also have evidence of a vast number of festivals each year which women attended after marriage, some local and others *polis*-scale events not only in Athens, but in many cities in Greece. Some were sanctioned and occupied a place in the state religion, like the Thesmophoria, Skira and Stenia, and yet others were disapproved of and unsanctioned, like the Adonia, and maenadic rites. Sometimes men were present and at other times the events were restricted to women. The literature on women and festivals is vast, and here I list just some of those works that have been consulted in

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[27]For further details on the difficulties of this passage, see Alan H. Sommerstein (ed.), *Lysistrata* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1990), pp.188-190, notes to lines 642-47. For more detailed accounts of the Arkteia, see Lily Kahil, 'L'Artémis de Brauron: rites et mystère', *AK*, 20 (1977), 86-98; Susan Guettel Cole, 'The Social Function of Rituals of Maturation: the *Koureion* and the *Arkteia*', *ZPE*, 55 (1984), 233-44; and Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood, *Studies in Girls' Transitions: Aspects of the Arkteia and Age Representation in Attic Iconography* (Athens: Kardamitsa, 1988). The Arrephoria is well documented in *Goddess and Polis: The Panathenaic Festival in Ancient Athens*, ed. by Jennifer Neils (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), see here especially the introduction by Neils (pp.13-27), and E. J. W. Barber, 'The Peplos of Athena', pp.103-17. For several of the other rites of transition listed above, see Louise Bruit Zaidman, 'Pandora's Daughters and Rituals in Grecian Cities', in *A History of Women in the West*, ed. by Georges Duby and Michelle Perot, 5 vols (Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press, 1992-94), I: *From Ancient Goddesses to Christian Saints*, ed. by Pauline Schmitt Pantel, trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (1992), pp.338-76; and Keuls (n.1), pp.305-20. For a study of female initiation rituals outside Athens, see Claude Calame, *Choruses of Young Women in Ancient Greece: Their Morphology, Religious Role, and Social Function*, trans. by Derek Collins and Jane Orion (Lanham, Maryland and London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997); and Martin P. Nilsson, *Griechische Feste von religiöser Bedeutung mit Ausschluss der Attischen* (repr. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1957). For a general understanding of initiation rituals, see Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. by M. B. Vizedom and G. L. Caffee (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960); first published as *Les Rites de passage: étude systematique des rites* (Paris: Nourry, 1909); and a useful comparative study, Bruce Lincoln, *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1981).

my research.[28]

Funerals

Another frequent public ceremony in which women played a key role is the funeral. Again, as I have already considered the impact of the female participation in this activity in Chapter 2, I will not repeat my analysis. There has been vast interest in the ways in which women were restricted in terms of their behaviour and dress in mourning rituals (see Chapter 2, pp.125-27, and nos 76 and 78, and here, n.15). In the strict funerary legislation dating from the seventh through to the third century BC, critics see attempts, amongst other things, to restrict women's freedom in the very public context of the funeral activities (e.g. [Dem.] 43.62-63, Plut. *Vit. Sol.* 21, Cic.

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[28]For an overview of festivals in Attica, Ludwig Deubner's *Attische Feste* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1956) is still important. H. W. Parke, *Festivals of the Athenians* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1977) devotes much space to the festivals of women. For festivals outside Attica, see Nilsson (n.27) and Calame (n.27). For a close study of the Demeter festivals, see Allaire Chandor Brumfield, *The Attic Festivals of Demeter and Their Relation to the Agricultural Year* (New York: Arno Press, 1981), and Zaidman (n.27). For maenadism, which has not been attested for Athens of the Classical period, but certainly took place in Boeotia, in some areas of the Peloponnese, at Delphi, and in some cities in Asia Minor, see Jan N. Bremmer, 'Greek Maenadism Reconsidered', *ZPE*, 55 (1984), 267-86; and Ross S. Kramer, 'Ecstasy and Possession: The Attraction of Women to the Cult of Dionysus', *HThR*, 72 (1979), 55-80. A comparative approach to other cults of possession, including maenadism is found in I. M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971). For studies of the unruly nature of the Athenian Adonia, see the iconography in *A City of Images: Iconography and Society in Ancient Greece*, ed. by Claude Bérard et al., trans. by Deborah Lyons (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), p.96ff, figs.131-34, and Keuls (n.1), pp.23-30, figs 4-5. For important work on the structural place of the Adonia in the scheme of festivals for women, see Marcel Detienne, *The Gardens of Adonis: Spices in Greek Mythology*, trans. by Janet Lloyd (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977), and the reply to this of John J. Winkler, 'The Laughter of the Oppressed: Demeter and the Gardens of Adonis' in Winkler (n.8), pp.188-209. Also on the Adonia, see Nicole Weill, 'Adôniazousai ou les femmes sur le toit', *BCH*, 90 (1966), 664-98.

Leg. 2.59-64).[29]

Instead, I shall focus on the funeral as a potential site for female interaction, to be seen in the same light as other such ceremonies as births and weddings, in which women gathered for legitimate purposes. As Karen Stears has suggested, women enjoyed the chief role in a funeral at the *prothesis* stage of the ceremony, which was carried out indoors. When the cortège (the *ekphora*) left for the burial area, men took the dominant role in the public eye.[30] But this is not to say that women did not have a public role to play in death ritual. For after burial, it was customary for the women to leave their houses on visits to the tombs, where they would lament and leave ritual objects. Stears sees this use of public space by women as a way in which women gained access to the public world. This new view of women and mourning is a departure from the traditional view of women and mourning as a private affair in contrast with the public mourning which was part of the Athenian *Epitaphia* ceremony. But through regular visits to the tombs, women would have had the opportunity to enjoy interaction with fellow women, pass on information and thus become actors in the power stakes of a reputation-based society. Female interaction at tombs would have constituted one way in which rumours were spread from the inside to the outside of the house, as Aristotle feared (*Pol.* 1313b32-35). And, as we discovered earlier, in the modern Mediterranean and other 'face-to-face' societies, the power of the female group, fostered by rumour which would be damaging to reputation, is not to be underestimated as a truly public weapon in the hands of women.

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[29]The danger of the public exposure of women leading to affairs may have been a factor involved in limiting the public aspect of women's involvement in funerals. In a speech of Lysias, an adulterous wife is apparently first noticed by her future seducer at the funeral of her husband's mother (Lys. 1.7-8).

[30]Karen Stears, 'Death Becomes Her: Gender and Athenian Death Ritual', in *The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece*, ed. by Sue Blundell and Margaret Williamson (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), pp.113-27 (p.120).

Marriage and birth ceremonies

Two further ceremonies, which have not been particularly well-documented, involved women centrally: marriages and the births of children.[31] According to Oakley and Sinos, the two images which are most often portrayed in Athenian art of a wedding are the scene of the wedding procession to the house of the groom and the scene of the bride amongst her friends, either preparing for the wedding or receiving gifts on the wedding night (Oakley and Sinos, p.44). The bride is almost never without her train of friends in the few days leading up to her marriage. These *nymphokomoi* (or *nympheutriai*: Ar. *Ach.* 1056) help the bride in several ways. Before going to the groom's house, the bride has a prenuptial bath, in water which has usually been brought from a consecrated well in traditional water-jars known as *loutrophoroi.* The bride is then anointed, her hair is arranged, and she is dressed by the female group. The women then help by carrying baskets, chests, and wedding vases, or some of the bridal accessories including the *stephanē,* necklace and veil, which must all go with the bride to her future destination. Although the women did not attend the *engyē* (the betrothal), which was carried out between the woman's present legal guardian and the bridegroom, they certainly had a central role in the activities of celebration constituting the wedding itself, called the *gamos,* and the final procession to the groom's house.[32]

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[31]The exceptions to this rule are, for weddings, John H. Oakley and Rebecca H. Sinos, *The Wedding in Ancient Athens* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), and, for the female involvement at birth ceremonies, Richard Hamilton, 'Sources for the Athenian Amphidromia', *GRBS,* 25 (1984), 243-51.

[32]Gatherings of women (*γυναικοπλήθεις*) and Thessalian *gamoi* are linked in Euripides' *Alcestis* 951-53, when Admetus worries that he will not be able to face the same-age friends of Alcestis at these two kinds of events. Also, in *Iphigenia in Tauris,* the chorus reminisces about its role amongst the young women singing and dancing in wedding ceremonies (1143-52). Evidence such as this from tragedy cannot, of course, be taken as a direct representation for the lives of women in the Classical period. Evidence from comedy, however, also stresses the centrality of women. Menander speaks of the all-night party of women celebrating a wedding (*γυναικῶν πανυχίδα*) (*Dys.* 855-57), and later, women are said to have become drunk and have danced at the wedding celebrations (*Dys.* 950-53). Again, caution is needed with evidence from comedy. In both these cases, the men could be talking of non-citizen

The women thus had ample opportunity to enjoy each other's company in the context of wedding activities, both in the *gynaikōnitis*, where the bridal preparations would have taken place, and also outside on the way to the groom's house. It is not difficult to imagine that the atmosphere of such an occasion would have resembled a contemporary 'hen-night', with the tone of the proceedings being dominated by the female relatives and friends of the bride. Whilst we have a good record of the female input into Athenian weddings, as illustrated by Oakley and Sinos with one hundred and thirty illustrations, there is, unsurprisingly, a dearth of evidence on the literary side which details the female activities surrounding weddings. This discrepancy may be a good example of the artistic evidence filling a gap in our knowledge left by the lack of literary evidence, as Oakley and Sinos suggest (p.7). This literary gap is shown to be filled by the female group, which has proved to be a central feature in the public transition of a woman from *parthenos* to *nymphē*.

The birth of children was another common event which appears to have been celebrated by men and women differently. We have quite a lot of evidence of an official ceremony, at which the baby is named (the *Dekate*), but also some more obscure references to another celebration of birth which is much more in the hands of women. The activity of women proves, as usual, to be not so well documented. There is great confusion in the sources as to the nature of the ceremonies surrounding the new born. There are references in both Classical literature and later scholiasts and lexicographers to ceremonies which are called the Amphidromia and the *Dekate*, which take place variously on the fifth, seventh and tenth days after birth. These sources cite such activities as running around the hearth holding the child; or running around the child on the floor; the sending of gifts by relatives; and a celebratory feast.[33] Hamilton attempts to sort out the hopeless confusion of the sources, by redirecting attention back from the lexicographers to the Classical sources, which, being closer

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women, *hetairai*, or indeed, fantasizing about what they would ideally like to happen at wedding celebrations.

[33]See Hamilton (n.31), who compiles all the contradictory sources.

to the events, may provide us with a more accurate picture (Hamilton, p.245ff, p.251).

Plato's *Theaetetus* describes how Socrates and Theaetetus have given birth to an argument, and it is necessary to run around it conducting the ἀμφιδρόμια, during which the child is examined to see if it is worth raising (*Tht.* 160e-161a). This metaphor appears to allude to the activities at an Amphidromia ceremony after the birth of a child. In the metaphoric version, Socrates as mother of the argument (the baby) and Theaetetus as the midwife must run around it. The ceremony of the Amphidromia may well have been in the women's hands, who move around the baby symbolically testing to see whether it has any defects, so that it can be accepted officially by the *oikos* as valid. Hamilton reinforces this impression by adducing three pieces of evidence from Classical literature, which all suggest a similar female ceremony for the Amphidromia (Hamilton, p.246).

First, Euripides' *Electra* is cited as evidence, where Electra sends word to Clytemnestra of the birth of a baby so that Clytemnestra can come to bewail the (low) birth of her child (658). This appears to be an invitation for the baby to be assessed by Clytemnestra in the context of some kind of validation ceremony. When Electra later asks Clytemnestra to carry out the appropriate sacrifices for her birth, Clytemnestra replies that this task is rather the job of the midwife (1125-28).

Second, it is the Erinyes in Hesiod who, on the fifth day after the birth of Oath, are busying themselves around him (ἀμφιπολεύειν) (Hes. *Op.* 803). This strongly suggests that the figures who attend the baby, perhaps in the ceremony of Amphidromia, are female, and more precisely, midwives. Finally, the story of Labda, the mother of Cypselus in Herodotus, may reflect, but not attest, the Amphidromia. Here, ten Bacchiads pass the baby from one to the other with the intention of killing him because he is presumed to be lame. They pass him all the way back round their circle to his mother unharmed, because none of them have the courage to kill him (Hdt. 5.92γ).

Fragments from fourth-century poets (Ephippus and Euboulus), however, put at the centre of the Amphidromia a large feast attended by many relatives outside the nuclear family (Hamilton, p.248). Hamilton concludes that the mystery of the activities

of the ceremony can be solved if we accept that the feast, which related to the public naming-day celebration, happened *after* the female ritual of running around the new-born baby (p.250). So the Amphidromia was first in the hands of the women who examined the baby, sacrificed to the gods, and prepared a lavish feast. The feast was attended by a larger gathering of relatives in the evening, at which point the child was named and presented to the family. The feasting and naming part of the ceremony had attracted so many of the references in literature, that the part of the ceremony which was the remit of women had almost been overlooked.

It is clear, however, from other sources, that women were always the first involved after the birth of a baby, or indeed *at* the birth (Ar. *Eccl.* 528, *Thesm.* 502-18). This collective activity of women, carried out beyond the jurisdiction of men, must yet again reorient our view of the activities of women. It also helps us see the way in which the nature of our data has systematically skewed the reality and reduced the roles taken by women in certain ceremonial activities.

(2) Domestic chores and female economic activity

As we have already seen, in those families who could not afford a slave; could only afford a slave for part of the year; or could afford slaves but required extra domestic help, the onus of the household chores would have fallen on the women. We have plenty of examples of lower-class women working in the market or as nurses to sustain their families. In a speech of Demosthenes, wage labour in public is defended as a necessity for all women, whose families fell on hard times, even if they were well-born (57.30-31), or whose husbands were away at war for a protracted length of time (57.42). Demosthenes defends his client, whose citizenship is in doubt because his mother had worked in menial labour, by stating that many free-born women became nurses, or worked at the loom or in the vineyards for payment due to their difficult economic situation during times of war (57.45).

It is clear from comparative studies in modern anthropology that, even where the social ideal of women remaining indoors exists, for many families the practicality of this situation is impossible. And the women must do their part for the household by

working both inside and outside of the house. This reality shows that women in Classical Athens may also have been obliged both to leave the house on a regular basis unaccompanied by their husbands (and perhaps unaccompanied by any men). It also indicates that women would have spent time with other women in such kinds of labour which could be shared, or at least, those which allow of company, as, for instance, picking fruit in an orchard, drawing water at springs or washing clothes at rivers. By contemporary analogy, it proves to be precisely the gender-prescribed daily activities that women undertake in Singapore, that are responsible for developing a community and fostering a female social network.[34] This interaction of women at work is another example of the potential for the development of the local female network in ancient Athens too. The Classical period abounds in examples of women working outside the house in the context of both domestic chores and wage labour.

Domestic Chores

Women working outside the house in an agricultural setting is fairly well-attested in both fifth-century art and literature.[35] Several black and red-figure Attic vases show

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[34]The kind of domestic chores included here as providing potential for the development of female networks even in an urban context are: trips to the market and shops; taking the children to *kindergarten*; and borrowing things from neighbours. See Aline K. Wong, 'Sex Roles, Lifecycle Stages, Social Networks and Community Development in Singapore', in *Persons and Powers of Women in Diverse Cultures: Essays in Commemoration of Audrey I. Richards, Phyllis Kaberry and Barbara E. Ward,* ed. by Shirley Ardener (New York and Oxford: Berg, 1992), pp.159-71 (pp.168-70).

[35]The problem of the correct interpretation of the status of women on vases has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention. Often it is difficult to tell whether the women depicted are free-born women, *hetairai,* slaves, or mythical figures. Because free-born women are not expected to engage in certain activities outside the house, quite a few vases of women are attributed as depicting slaves or *hetairai,* through the circular argument of assigning all non-citizen type activities to slaves. In the light of the increasing number of activities which we are now able to attribute to free women, this argument requires major revision. See Bérard (n.28), pp.89, and Dyfri Williams, 'Women on Athenian Vases: Problems of Interpretation', in Cameron and Kuhrt (n.1), pp.92-106, (pp.103-05).

tranquil scenes of groups of women picking fruit from fruit trees in orchards. There are no indications on these vases that the intention of the artist was to portray religious or mythological scenes. Rather, they represent either scenes of domestic or wage labour.[36]

Brock notes that there are various words in the fragments of the comic poets, mostly Aristophanes, to depict female wage labourers on the land. He has collected words for winnowers, weeders, reapers, wood-collectors and gleaners. Unfortunately, however, these words give us little indication of the status of the women (e.g. Ar. *Nub.* 1358).[37] Thinking primarily about the fourth century, Aristotle said that the poor sometimes used oxen on the land instead of slaves (*Pol.* 1252b12), but they also used their wives and children in place of slaves (*Pol.* 1323a5-6). In the light of all the fifth-century evidence, Brock calls for a reassessment of the belief that women only went to work on the land after, and as a result of, the Peloponnesian War (Brock, p.344).

Allied to such female tasks as working in the fields and picking fruit, is the

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[36]See Helena M. Fracchia, 'The San Simeon Fruitpickers', *California Studies in Classical Antiquity*, 5 (1972), 103-11. The vases include the 'San Simeon *Hydria*' by the Yale *Oinochoe* Painter; an Attic red-figure *kalpsis*, circa 475 BC (*ARV* 503.21), which shows three plainly dressed fruit-pickers standing around an (apple?) tree. Providing examples of the genre are a red-figure *hydria* (*ARV* 582.19), and a column *krater*, called 'The Orchard Vase' by the Orchard Painter circa 460 BC showing a leafy tree with fruits on and five women with two large baskets standing around it (Fracchia, pl.4, p.108). The San Simeon vase is one of five *hydriai* attributed to the Yale *Oinochoe* Painter around the first half of the fifth century by Beazley (*ARV* 503.20, 22, 23, 24). The earliest of these (503.20) shows a mythological scene, but all the rest show scenes from the everyday domestic life of women, e.g. feeding cranes, spinning. This indicates even more convincingly that the fruit-picking scenes represent the everyday activity of women, and moreover, free-born women, who do not have any marks indicating slave status. See also the useful work by Amy Swerdlow who catalogues several vases showing women in close companionship. She has examples of women sitting together preparing wool, chatting and passing each other such objects as garlands or flowers. She comments that the degree of intimacy shown between the women here is missing from the literature and history of the period written by men. See Amy Swerdlow, 'The Greek Citizen Women in Attic Vase-Painting: New Views and New Questions', *Women's Studies*, 5 (1978), 267-84 (p.273).

[37]Brock (n.21), p.343.

daily task of fetching water from a spring or fountain. Because Greek cities were often built in high rocky locations, the sources of water would often be found at some distance from the populated centres, for instance, on the plains outside the city walls. As a result, vast fountain houses were constructed at the site of springs to shelter the water carriers from the heat and provide a station to rest. Again, we have many examples in art of women in groups filling their jars with water at fountain houses.[38] The earliest scenes of women at fountain houses are found on black-figure *hydriai* from the 530s BC. While there are approximately seventy examples in black-figure, the number of examples in red-figure declines to twenty. Commonly, at least four women are shown in pairs, some filling their *hydriai*, others going towards or leaving the fountain. The atmosphere portrayed in these scenes, from some of the earliest examples of *hydriai* in the 530s BC, is often one of lively interaction with the women gesticulating to each other with expressive facial gestures. These scenes clearly depict women chatting together (e.g. *ABV* 266.2, *ABV* 334.1-5, *ABV* 393.1). There was always the threat at these outlying fountain houses, however, that men were lurking to accost the women who had come on their water-fetching errand, as in the *hydria* from the Acheloos Painter from 520 BC (*ABV* 384.26, cf. *ABV* 387.18, *ABV* 397.31).

On account of the distance of some of the fountain houses from the city and the perceived lowly nature of the job, the assumption is usually made that the women depicted on these vases are slave, rather than free women. If the women are free, the images are often assumed to depict scenes from a *Hydrophoria* festival, rather than

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[38]See Lise Hannestad, 'Slaves and the Fountain House Theme', in *Ancient Greek and Related Pottery: Proceedings of the International Vase Symposium in Amsterdam, 12-15 April 1984*, ed. by H. A. G. Brijder (Amsterdam: Allard Pierson Museum, 1984), pp.252-55; François Lissarague, 'Figures of Women', in Schmitt Pantel (n.27). pp.139-229 (p.199); Bérard (n.28), pp.95-96; Williams (n.35), pp.102-04; Keuls (n.1), pp.235-40; and Eva C. Keuls, 'Attic Vase-Painting and the Home Textile Industry', in *Ancient Greek Art and Iconography*, ed. by Warren G. Moon (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), pp.209-30 (pp.211-13). Keuls suggests here that water-carrying and textile-working are the only two fully sanctioned female occupations (unlike all the other work activities) open to women of all social classes. She suggests this because they are both deeply embedded in the mythico-religious thought of the Classical age, and aligned with the female (p.209).

from the daily life of free-born women. A festival context, however, would usually be signified by the presence of a god, or special ritual dress as in the *hydria* (circa 520-510 BC) which depicts Hermes and Dionysus at a fountain house with a group of women filling their water jars (*ABV* 333.27). As we have been discovering in other contexts, mere presumptions about the appropriate activities of free-born women cannot be used to establish the status of the women on these vases.

Herodotus suggests that in the sixth century the Pelasgians who had been settled by the Athenians at the foot of Mount Hymettus used to accost Athenian girls and boys when they came to get water from the 'Nine Springs Fountain' (6.137.3). Herodotus explains that in those earlier days no one had slaves, unlike during his time, so the daughters of citizens used to fetch the water. Herodotus implies that in his own day (of the early fifth century) water-fetching was considered a slave's job. On this evidence, the early vases from the sixth century could indeed represent free-born women. Herodotus's account does not imply, however, that in the fifth century all families would have had slaves to fetch water, but only that the *ideal* was for slaves to do this task.

We have several examples from the world of tragedy of female society at streams and springs. Although this is attractive evidence, it cannot, of course, be directly cited as indicative of fifth-century custom. In *Hippolytus*, the chorus of free-born women hear and spread the news about the ailing queen at the spring where clothes are washed and water is drawn (125-30). Electra in Euripides' *Electra* goes to the fetch water from a stream to emphasize her lowly position. Her peasant husband is concerned for her doing this because she was brought up as royalty (65). Thus the distinction made is not between a slave and a free woman, but a poor woman and a princess. Later, however, Orestes sees Electra and assumes she is a slave (107-11). It would be safe to conclude that the fountain house and stream were places for slaves and working women, and ideally avoided by the wealthy, whose slaves would have attended to such matters. This suggestion is lent credibility by the scene in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* where citizen women are compelled to jostle with a crowd at the fountain house and find themselves amidst slaves (327-31).

The social significance for women of fetching water has been attested for many different 'face-to-face' countries throughout the Mediterranean. Gathering together at wells was viewed as an official reason for women to be out of the house, but exploited by women as an opportunity to enjoy each others' company and to chatter. As in the Classical sources, going out to the well is viewed in contemporary Mediterranean societies as providing opportunities to meet with the opposite sex.[39] Even after running water had been brought to many Greek villages, women still gathered at the well to continue the former socializing that had transpired there. Gavrielides recounts of a village in the Argolid:

> Before running water was brought to the village five years ago, women used to congregate at the village spring to wash their clothes in groups. Today, women are still seen in the evenings sitting at the side of the spring eating pusatembo (salted pumpkin seeds) and gossiping.[40]

From the images of women at fountain houses on the above vases, the opportunity provided by the fountain house for women to indulge in social interaction, appears to have been one also taken up in the Classical world.

Female economic activity

As Brock has shown, for those families who needed extra income, it fell to the free-born women of the family to apply their domestic skills outside the house to earn money.[41] We have evidence from the Classical period that some Athenian women

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[39]For instance, Anne H. Fuller, *Buarij: Portrait of a Lebanese Muslim Village* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), p.51; and Susan Tax Freeman, *Neighbors: The Social Contract in a Castilian Hamlet* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p.54ff.

[40]Nicolas Gavrielides, 'Name Days and Feasting: Social and Ecological Implications of Visiting Patterns in a Greek Village in the Argolid', *AQ*, 47 (1974) [Special Issue: *Visiting Patterns and Social Dynamics in Eastern Mediterranean Communities*, ed. by Amal Vinogradov], 48-70 (p.55).

[41]Brock (n.21), p.338.

made and sold items in the market. Much of our evidence comes from Aristophanic comedy, so may be thought to reflect much more clearly the practices of the fifth century, than tragedy. The items sold by women cover a large range of goods including such foodstuffs as bread (Ar. *Ran.* 857-58, *Lys.* 458, *Vesp.* 238, 1388-1414), porridge (Ar. *Lys.* 457, 562, *Plut.* 426-28), vegetables and herbs (Ar. *Vesp.* 497-99, *Lys.* 457, and if we believe Aristophanes' taunts that Euripides' mother was a herbseller, *Ach.* 478, *Thesm.* 387, 456, *Ran.* 840), and garlic (Ar. *Lys.* 458). Women also used their skills in textile work learnt in the *oikos* for financial advantage in the market, by selling their wool-work (Ar. *Ran.* 1349-50), and garlands (Ar. *Thesm.* 446-58).

Women who did not sell in the market, may certainly have shopped there. It becomes clear from the conversation between Lysistrata, the leader of the female-half of the chorus and the magistrate that both the women had been in the market. For they claim to have witnessed cavalry officers buying food from female sellers, such as the one mentioned who sold figs (Ar. *Lys.* 555-64).

Several of these references depict the women market sellers as of quite low-status and coarse. Fragments from a comedy by Hermippus, a writer of Old comedy, describe a play he staged called *Ἀρτοπώλιδες* (*Women Bread Sellers),* in which wage-earning is equated with prostitution. For a woman is addressed as 'foul woman, every man's whore, wild sow' - *ὦ σαπρὰ καὶ πασιπόρνη καὶ κάπραινα* - (Kassel-Austin, *PCG* 5, frs 7-12, pp.565-68, see fr.9). But in some cases, women are forced into economic activity in the markets or elsewhere because of financial straits due to their husbands being away at war. We have already encountered sentiments of pity for the free-born working mother in Demosthenes (57.30-31). And above in *Thesmophoriazusae*, a woman describes how she turned to selling garlands because of her husband's death away on military campaign (446-58).

Females working as innkeepers/retailers also receive a very bad name, and are accorded a status more or less akin to prostitutes. From the evidence available, however, it is clear that many of them are free-born women. Lysistrata's group of helpers, as well as including tough market women, also features *πανδοκεύτριαι*

(hostesses/inn-keepers) (Ar. *Lys.* 458). Another name for women who work in inns/taverns is καπηλίδες (Ar. *Thesm.* 347, *Plut.* 426, 1120-22). These sorts of women are renowned for their bad language (Ar. *Vesp.* 39-40) and dishonesty (Ar. *Plut.* 435-36, Pl. *Leg.* 918d6ff).[42]

It is hardly surprising to discover that midwifery and nurse-maid work constituted the best attested area in which women worked and earned money. The popularity of the trade of nurse-maid for women is known to us through the abundance of tombstones depicting nurses and their former charges.[43] In tragedy, nurses attached to royal families abound, and prove to be quite influential figures in the family, as in Euripides' *Medea* and *Hippolytus*. But beyond the idealized, regal environment of tragedy, it was considered a common thing for women to serve as nurse-maids to families who could afford them, although many slaves also worked as nurse-maids (Dem. 57.35). In Plato's *Theaetetus*, there is large section concerning midwives (*Tht.* 149aff). Here we find the suggestion that women only served as midwives when they were too old to conceive themselves, like Socrates' mother, Phaenarete (*Tht.* 149a1-2, 149b5-7), but midwives were certainly considered honourable women (*Tht.* 150a1-6). This example presents us with a case for distinguishing carefully between different ages of women so that a more nuanced picture of what was socially acceptable for the different categories of women is revealed. Just because it was the social ideal for *only* post-menopausal women to serve as midwives, it does not mean that this protocol was strictly adhered to.

As we have already seen, childbirth was in the hands of women who would customarily go to each other's houses to offer informal help (Ar. *Eccl.* 528-30, *Thesm.*

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[42]As Brock points out, the female innkeepers in *Frogs* are clearly metics, because they turn to their patrons, Cleon and Hyperbolus for redress against Dionysus/Hercules (Ar. *Ran.* 549-78) (Brock, p.341).

[43]Details of these are found in Brock (n.21), pp.336-37, n.4. See Nancy Demand for the traditional centrality of women in the spheres of pregnancy and childbirth. They assisted in deliveries, but also gave advice on fertility, abortion and contraception. See Nancy Demand, *Birth, Death, and Motherhood in Classical Greece* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), pp.63, 66-68.

502-18, Eur. *El.* 1129-30). Nursing the sick members of the *oikos* was also ideally considered the job of the household's free-born women who were thought innately skilled at it ([Dem.] 59.56, Xen. *Oec.* 7.37). To transfer a skill aligned culturally with the female to the environment of economic exchange would have seemed a natural thing for women whose families needed the extra money. The involvement of women in tending the sick, working as nurses and delivering babies, although primarily a women's world, forces us to reassess the position of women in Classical Athenian society. In order to be able to get to, and negotiate with, the households in which the nurse or midwife was required, she must have been much more independent than we have as yet allowed for in our assessments of women in the Classical world.

(3) Female visiting networks

A substantial body of evidence from anthropological studies of modern Mediterranean societies and other contemporary 'face-to-face' societies shows that, where women are segregated from men and carry out a set of daily activities which are different from those of men, an intimate network of female friendships, particularly amongst neighbours, flourishes. The anecdotal evidence about female interaction from the Classical period, viewed in the light of the paradigm of female networking from modern societies, indicates the great likelihood that a female friendship network also existed in ancient Athens.

Anthropologists have recently studied the precise social structures in the Mediterranean which promote strong same-sex attachments. According to Kennedy, who investigated a mountain village on Crete, the women's community is made of exceptionally strong ties. She concludes that both geographical isolation and exclusion from the apparently dominant male culture encourage women to develop 'coping mechanisms' manifested in female networks.[44] Other anthropologists have drawn

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[44]Robinette Kennedy, 'Women's Friendships on Crete: A Psychological Perspective', in Dubisch (n.2), pp.121-38 (p.124). See also Mariella Doumanis, *Mothering in Greece: From Collectivism to Individualism* (London: Academic Press, 1983), pp.40-41.

similar conclusions concerning the circumstances necessary to promote strong female interaction, whether in Mediterranean or other societies, and have concluded that the division of labour, and a structural disadvantage in marriage (thus, a virilocal society), are required for strong female friendship networks to develop.[45]

The development of a female network in response to a woman's conditions need not imply consciously militant action, but rather an unconscious desire for supportive friends or simply company. It is highly likely that a new wife, having moved into the kin group of her husband in a virilocal marriage, would have experienced acute feelings of isolation. In her new home, she was surrounded by his immediate family, which initially perhaps perceived the new bride as encapsulating a threat as an outsider. She had recently been taken away from her own close kin, potentially at an early age, after a traumatic and symbolic wedding ceremony of severance from the natal home.[46] She would have presumably sought out women in the same position as

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[45]Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, 'Woman, Culture, and Society: A Theoretical Overview', in *Woman, Culture, and Society,* ed. by Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp.18-42 (pp.39, 41); Peter Loizos and Euthymios Papataxiarchis, 'Introduction: Gender and Kinship in Marriage and Alternative Contexts', in *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece*, ed. by Peter Loizos and Euthymios Papataxiarchis (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp.3-25 (p.22); and Nancy B. Leis, 'Women in Groups: Ijaw Women's Associations', in Rosaldo and Lamphere above, pp.223-42 (pp.232, 242). Even more up-to-date material on women who are meant to be 'behind the veil' but find opportunities to mix socially is found in the recent reports of women in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. After the Taliban took control of Kabul in 1996, in a Muslim-fundamentalist drive to counter western moral depravity, women were suddenly banned from attending school beyond the age of eight, studying at university, or working in anything other than the medical profession. Because of the increasing isolation felt by the women, and the increase in the suicide rate amongst women, clandestine women's cooperatives have slowly developed in the suburbs of Kabul offering carpet-weaving, needlework, educational classes, and above all, social contact with other women. See Julian West, 'Taliban's Law Drives Women to Suicide', *Sunday Telegraph,* 17 May 1998, p.31, and Carla Power, 'Women Under the Taliban', *Observer,* 12 July 1998, p.26.

[46]Barbara McManus suggests the possible feelings of an Athenian bride due to the traumatic nature of the wedding ceremony through a method she calls 'multicentering the text'. This method incorporates a comparative study with modern

herself, both for empathy, aid and simply companionship. They would have been outside her husband's immediate kin group, but facing the same daily life as herself.[47]

Recent critics have gone even further to suggest that friendships amongst women in virilocal societies are especially non-hierarchical, 'not because women see equality and justice as banners before their eyes', but precisely because they see their common condition as outsiders in their husband's environment and will not tolerate distinctions within their ranks.[48] Or to put it another way, the situation of being a woman in a virilocal society creates a sense of solidarity amongst women, because the women's realization of their common position provides a basis for cooperation and mutual support. When describing the networks of women in the Awlad 'Ali tribe of Bedouins in Egypt, Abu-Lughod maintains that '[b]ecause power and authority are hardly at issue in the relations among women, their world is one of relaxed informality,

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Greek wedding practices and bridal attitudes. See Barbara F. McManus, 'Multicentering: The Case of the Athenian Bride', *Helios*, 17.2 (1990), 225-35 (pp.231-32). See also the fragment from Sophocles' *Tereus* which describes the unhappy feelings of a woman on getting married. She considers transplantation into a strange home, which is likely to be joyless or unfriendly, a poor substitute for the idyllic time spent at home in her father's house (*TrGF* 4, fr.583, p.439).

[47]Lin Foxhall also entertains the idea that friendships between neighbours would have been important to a woman due to her position as a 'stranger in a strange land in her husband's house'. See Lin Foxhall, 'The Politics of Affection: Emotional Attachments in Athenian Society', in *Kosmos: Essays in Order, Conflict and Community in Classical Athens*, ed. by Paul Cartledge, Paul Millett and Sitta von Reden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.52-67 (p.63).

[48]Henry Rosenfeld, 'Non-Hierarchical, Hierarchical and Masked Reciprocity in an Arab Village' in Vinogradov (n.40), 139-65 (p.149). See also Ursula Sharma, 'Segregation and its Consequences in India: Rural Women in Himachal Pradesh', in *Women United, Women Divided: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Female Solidarity*, ed. by Patricia Caplan and Janet M. Bujra (London: Tavistock Press, 1978), pp.259-82 (p.260); and Lloyd A. and Margaret C. Fallers, 'Sex Roles in Edremit', in *Mediterranean Family Structures*, ed. by J. G. Peristany (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), pp.243-60 (pp.253-54, 260).

familiarity, and a certain honesty'.[49]

The virilocal model above represents the kind of marriage situation found in ancient Athens. It is possible to draw on this modern model to suggest that friendship groups amongst women could have flourished in Athens to a greater degree than has so far been generally accepted.

Several contemporary anthropologists of Mediterranean countries are concerned with the system of sanctioned lying which women employ to safeguard a certain degree of independence in their daily activities. It has been shown that in modern Greece women use such excuses to see friends, as the need to borrow an item from a neighbour or to help a friend with a domestic or health issue. This is not to say that they do not need to borrow something or give help, but such an excuse is considered legitimate in the way that just visiting to socialize is not.[50]

There are many examples in literature from the Classical period that women engaged in a network of visiting activities. Literature gives us the kinds of excuses used so that women could leave the house legitimately, such as to borrow food, utensils, jewellery, clothes, money, or to assist at births or in other moments of need. For instance, the neighbour of Praxagora's husband suggests that illicit female socializing with friends is the cause of her disappearance during the night in *Ecclesiazusae* (348-49). She, however, excuses her absence by saying that she had

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[49]Lila Abu-Lughod, 'A Community of Secrets: The Separate World of the Bedouin Women', *Signs*, 10 (1985), 637-57 (p.657).

[50]See Juliet Du Boulay, *Portrait of a Greek Mountain Village* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), Chapters 8, 9 (pp.169-229); Marie-Elisabeth Handman, *La Violence et la ruse: hommes et femmes dans un village grec* (Aix-en-Provence: Edisud, 1983), pp.147-98; and Michael Herzfeld, 'Semantic Slippage and Moral Fall: The Rhetoric of Chastity in Rural Greek Society', *JMGS*, 1 (1983), 161-72 (p.171). See also anthropology of the Arab world, which shows how women's gatherings are illicit, and yet at the same time, permitted by men who turn a blind eye, as long as the activities remain discreet. See Juliette Minces, *The House of Obedience: Women in Arab Society*, trans. by Michael Pallis (London: Zed Press, 1982), p.40, and Unni Wikan, *Behind the Veil in Arabia: Women in Oman* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), *passim*.

attended at the birth of a child (528-29). This excuse appears to have been a formulaic one that would have been considered acceptable. In the same way, when Electra delivers her own baby in Euripides' *Electra*, Clytemnestra is shocked and asks why there were no neighbours on hand to help her (*El.* 1129-30).

Another such excuse suggesting that giving mutual aid was a sanctioned reason to go to a neighbour is found in Lysias. Here, the adulterous wife tells the husband that she needed to go to the neighbour's house to get her lamp relit. This is pure fabrication so that she could continue her affair (Lys. 1.14). It is stressed that the husband did not suspect anything and was not in the least disturbed by her reason to go out, suggesting that it was a natural thing for women to do.

In *Ecclesiazusae*, there is mention of women lending each other all sorts of items and returning them with no need of a witness (446-50). This image suggests that women met during the day on a regular basis. Admittedly, it is in the interests of the comic idea in the play for women to appear particularly communitarian in spirit, but the basic notion of women borrowing items from each other is not particularly far-fetched. We have examples of regular borrowing and lending amongst women in the fourth-century writer Theophrastus (circa 320 BC), in which the penurious man forbids his wife from lending salt, lamp-wicks, aniseed, marjoram, barley-groats, garlands or incense to a neighbour, because of the cumulative cost over the course of a year (Theophr. *Char.* 10.19-21).

Ecclesiazusae begins with a scene of women gathering in the early hours of the morning outside their houses. The difficulty of slipping out of the house is developed into a comic theme, but nevertheless, the women do manage to meet, thereby showing the potential for a subculture of female activity (*Eccl.* 30-56). In *Lysistrata* we have a similar plot in which women protest how much difficulty they have experienced in trying to leave the house to meet up with Lysistrata for a secret rendezvous (16-19). If women wanted to meet their neighbours and friends, it seems highly likely that they could have found ways. According to Plutarch's *Moralia*, a woman should make no friends of her own, but share her husband's friends (*Coniugalia Praecepta* 12.19 (140d)). But in fact, due to the daily lives of women and the need for assistance with

daily activities, women would have made friends with whomever they needed to and wanted (Dem. 55.23-24).

There appears to have been at least a belief that women were visiting each other in Classical Athens and gossiping together. For Aristotle's suggestion that women spread rumours abroad from their homes (*Pol.* 1313b32-35) is reinforced by the common *topos* in tragedy that it was in the woman's own home that damaging gossip was spread by visiting women (Eur. *Andr.* 930-38, *Hipp.* 395-97, 645-48, *Tro.* 651-52).

If we compare these examples with some contemporary anthropological evidence from Greece and elsewhere which allude to the illicit activities of women, we find some very close correspondences and intriguing comparisons. For instance, Abu-Lughod on the Bedouin Awlad 'Ali tribe states that the women are expected to stay indoors unless they have a legitimate reason not to. For, '[m]ost visited with women in other households, using an excuse like the need to borrow or return something, or the appearance of a guest in the camp'.[51] This model of female visiting behaviour in a contemporary virilocal face-to-face society offers us useful comparative material for the possible behaviour of women in ancient Athens.

Conclusion

In an article on the depiction of women in fifth-century tragedy, Easterling notes that the presence of a sympathetic chorus of women who have come to visit the heroine

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[51]Abu-Lughod (n.49), p.652. For other useful comparative material on the Bedouin women of Egypt and their subversive networks, see Lila Abu-Lughod, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1986); 'The Romance of Resistance: Tracing Transformations of Power through Bedouin Women', in *Beyond the Second Sex: New Directions in the Anthropology of Gender*, ed. by Peggy Reeves Sanday and Ruth Gallagher Goodenough (Philadephia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), pp.313-37; and *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories* (Berkeley, CA and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993).

is not presented as anything out of the ordinary.[52] There are three broad reasons which Easterling finds in the tragedies to explain the stage presence of a female chorus. The first category includes local women who are not slaves, attendants or prisoners of war, but who are free-born women and visiting the main protagonist as a friend. The second category consists in captive women and slaves, and the third, women on journeys or outsiders on specific errands (Easterling, p.23). In each case, the presence of the women outside their own homes is considered completely unexceptional. Easterling notes that in the first category especially we have an example of a 'shared women's world' (p.24).

As Easterling further notes, no direct correlation can be made, between the norms for women on the tragic stage and the norms and behaviour of women in the fifth century. All that can be deduced from the stage images of women is that they offered 'a range of images of female behaviour' and that it 'made at least some kind of sense to their contemporary audience' (Easterling, p.26). By viewing the references about a shared women's world in tragedy together with all the other scattered but significant references to women's interaction in Classical writing, it is possible to begin to perceive a network of women's activities in ancient Athens that has been hitherto unrecognized.

Of course, there is no possibility of presenting hard proof of such dynamic female networks. The evidence from comparative material in modern social anthropology, however, helps us to ask pertinent questions of the ancient material and to discard our ethnocentric view.

It is important, therefore, when considering the position of women in Classical Greece, to think about polarized views of public and private activities; to differentiate between social prescription and social practice; to consider the differences to a woman's life due to economic status and whether she exists in a rural or urban environment; and to take account of the effects of major historical events on the roles of women. After viewing the ancient material in the light of these important caveats

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[52]P. E. Easterling, 'Women in Tragic Space', *BICS*, 34 (1987), 15-26 (p.23).

applied in recent social anthropology to the study of contemporary societies, it is possible to see female activity in the ancient world in a different light. Moreover, the model of female networks offered by the contemporary ethnographies of 'face-to-face' societies offers one useful model for the way women in ancient Athens may have operated in social networks. The significance of such networks for the women of the fifth century should not be underestimated, nor its significance for the men.

It was not just the women who enjoyed such a broad range of single-sex activity, of course, there were very many spheres in which men operated without women. For instance, the Assembly, the lawcourts, the theatre, symposia and gymnasia, male-only festivals, and the phratries, into which male children were introduced; and demes where eighteen year-old men were registered as members of the *polis*, constitute just some examples.[53] The men and women had parallel lives, but the male activities were viewed by the creators of culture as natural, legitimate, and central to defining the male ingroup, so they did not attract negative comment (except, of course, in Aristophanes). The women's parallel activities, however, were seen as less legitimate and somehow mere temporary incursions into acceptable community activity, which was the province of men.

At a very basic level, the men of Athens were presumably afraid of the ability of women to form a coherent community without them, as the classic case of the Amazons shows. But the communal world of women persisted, as we have seen, in many different forms, and the men were dimly aware of its existence, without knowing its precise nature. By adopting the social identity perspective, I suggest that the existence of such an active women's world in fifth-century Athens, which the men of Athens noticed, yet, at the same tme, lacked detailed information about, and thus feared, was one factor that significantly increased the formation of the negative stereotypes of exclusive female activity found throughout the Classical period.

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[53]Women were not normally regarded as phratry members, but after the citizenship law of Pericles in 451 BC they were sometimes introduced into their father's phratry or presented to their husband's phratry at the *gamelia*.

Conclusion

Recognizing the significance of the group

> *οὐ γυναῖκες εἷλον Αἰγύπτου τέκνα*
> *καὶ Λῆμνον ἄρδην ἀρσένων ἐξῴκισαν;*
> (Eur. *Hec.* 886-87)

Danaids brutally slaughtering the sons of Aegyptus in a night-time blood-bath; Lemnian women eradicating the entire male population of the island of Lemnos: these are the classic examples of collective female power, offered by Hecuba in answer to Agamemnon's question of how women could ever get the mastery of men (Eur. *Hec.* 886-87). Hecuba says that women *en masse* (*πλῆθος*) are particularly fearsome and hard to defeat with their deceitful ways (*δεινὸν τὸ πλῆθος σὺν δόλῳ τε δύσμαχον* 884). Hecuba need not have stopped at these two examples. For as I have shown in this thesis, the theme of the transgressive and dangerous female group causing all sorts of damage to male society is prevalent to the point of notoriety in the literary discourse of the Classical period. The preoccupation with the dangerous female group is not paralleled by a similar degree of interest in groups of any other kind. The negative portrayal of female groups is exemplified by so many examples in the literature of the period, that it clearly constituted an important and enduring theme which required some explanation. In this study, I hope to have shed some light on the phenomenon of the literary preoccupation with the female group, and to have offered a reasonable hypothesis to explain its prevalence and notoriety.

As I have argued, focusing on the representations of female groups is a vital contribution to gender studies in the ancient world, as, up until now, the focus in research has been primarily on the individual female. The investigation of the groups was carried out by scrutinizing the literary references to female groups in such genres as tragedy, comedy, history, philosophy, and medical treatises. The new insights which I have been able to bring to the groups, however, resulted from employing

theories found in disciplines outside traditional Classics. Some other critics have also sought theories from outside Classics to aid their studies of women in Antiquity (see Introduction, n.7). And innovative use has been made of such disciplines as comparative social anthropology, as seen especially in the work of Winkler and Cohen (see Chapter 5). The most important methodological tool that I adopted, however, has proved to be social identity theory derived from social psychology. This is a theory designed specifically to describe and explain *group* dynamics. It is a method of exploring the way groups both perceive themselves as something other than an aggregate of individuals, and the way in which they, in turn, are perceived in certain predictable ways by others outside their group.

I was able to offer an hypothesis as to why there existed such a preoccupation with the female group in the literature of the Classical period, by drawing on social identity theory and such related disciplines as discourse analysis and sociolinguistics, and also by employing insights from modern social anthropology in comparative analysis. I call my finding an 'hypothesis', since we are not in a position to have it verified by the ancient society in question. It stands, however, as a theory, which could be tested further in different contexts using texts from different genres.

For I suggest that, if we conceptualize the categories of free-born women and citizen men in Classical Athens as two separate social categories or groups, rather than simply aggregates of individuals, the dynamics between them offer us some fascinating insights into inter-group activity. Because of the need to retain a relatively positive social identity for one's own group, this would have resulted in the generation of a number of perceptions, including negative stereotypical evaluations of the groups from which one was excluded (outgroups), and more positive evaluations of one's own group, or groups analogous to it (ingroup).[1] The depictions of groups encompass both real and imaginary groups. It was almost without exception, free-born men who created and dominated the written culture which has come down to

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[1]See Leon Festinger, 'A Theory of Social Comparison Processes', *Human Relations*, 7 (1954), 117-40, and the more nuanced assessments of this issue in the recent works by Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams (Introduction, n.14).

us as representing society in Classical Greece. Or more precisely, for the Classical period, we can attribute the works primarily to Athenian citizen men, or those adopting the values of this body. It is not surprising, therefore, that we find, generally speaking, uncritical images of male free-born groups, analogous to the creative citizen body, and negative stereotypical images of groups which were alien to this body, such as women, slaves, foreigners, and non-human uncivilized groups. On this basis, there should be an equal number of negative depictions of all the various groups which were not analogous to the category of free-born Greek men. We find, however, a disproportionately large number of negative depictions of the female group.

This discrepancy can be explained if we adopt the very convincing argument, propagated by some social identity theorists, that of all the possible social categories by which one seeks to define oneself, sexual identity is the most basic.[2] It is thought to possess this fundamental status in androcentric societies partly because it is the first identity learned. Also, whereas there exists a multitude of groups against which one can define oneself in terms of age, profession, family situation, religious orientation, nationality, and ethnicity, sexual identity is viewed by some as a case in which there are just two contrasting categories. Thus it is not surprising that it is the female outgroup, more than any other, against which the male ingroup seeks to define itself in opposition.

In addition to this more fundamental argument, I have also suggested two other possible factors, which may have significantly increased the literary and artistic focus on the female group, rather than any other outgroup, in the Classical canon. First, the proximity of the female outgroup to the male ingroup potentially added to the focus on the female group as chief negative counterpart. For women were the most immediate human outgroup to the male citizen body at Athens as they were constantly present; involved intimately in men's lives; and formed part of the *polis*

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[2]See Marisa Zavalloni, 'Ego-ecology: The Study of the Interaction between Social and Personal Identities', in *Identity: Personal and Socio-Cultural. A Symposium*, ed. by Anita Jacobson-Widding (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wicksell International; Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1983), pp.205-31 (p.215).

community. Ironically, however, they were at the same time excluded from many of the activities which defined membership of the *polis*, and they did not constitute part of the citizen group in the way that men did. They had there own parallel activities which they carried out in exclusive groups of women. Second, and allied to the first point, the often underestimated frequency of female interaction in the daily life of Classical Athens or, to put it another way, the existence of a shared 'women's world', can be understood as increasing the number of negative references and stereotypical depictions of the female group in the literature of the period.[3]

For on the one hand, the women's world was undoubtedly visible enough for the men of Athens to have been aware of its existence, but, on the other, they were excluded from it. According to social identity theory, people rely on dominant schemata or stereotypes to describe groups other than their own, especially when they lack detailed information about the other group and its shared activities. Thus the result would have been that the level of curiosity and even anxiety about the female groups was heightened.[4] This anxiety, in turn, would have resulted in a whole range of negative intergroup stereotyping and homogenization to compensate for the male lack of knowledge about the female group. The myriad allusions to negative female groups which this thesis has documented throughout the literature of the Classical period were the result of such a lack of knowledge and anxiety on the part of the male-dominated society.

Apart from the male perspective of the female group, social identity theory can also help us to postulate some alternatives for the female perspective on her own group. Because social identity theory suggests the kinds of psychological states resulting from group membership, including such positive states as uncertainty

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[3]I take the term 'shared women's world' from P. E. Easterling, in 'Women in Tragic Space', *BICS*, 34 (1987), 15-26 (p.24).

[4]See David A. Wilder, 'Freezing Intergroup Evaluations: Anxiety Fosters Resistance to Counterstereotypic Information', in *Group Motivation: Social Psychological Perspectives* ed. by Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), pp.68-86 (p.70).

reduction, enjoyment and positive evaluation of the group and the self, ingroup favouritism, conformity to group norms and solidarity, it can help us to understand the kinds of attitudes and feelings of the women themselves as they perceived themselves members of various exclusively female groups. It is basically immaterial whether one studies relatively small-scale groups, like an Athenian women-only festival, or larger female groups like the community of women in Athens who met on a regular basis for festivals and ceremonies and shared the same daily lives and chores, because the psychological state of being a member of a group of any size entails similar attitudes. The suggestions concerning the female perspective of her own community are important in this thesis, as they conceptualize Athenian women as deriving much pleasure and an important sense of self-worth from their community. This perspective is clearly at odds with two other conceptions of women. One, which is the attitude of some critics, regards women as living dull, relatively circumscribed lives, and attending women-only events merely out of a sense of duty to the *polis*. The other conception, that is found commonly in the ancient texts themselves, describes women in groups as a dangerous menace, whose internal unity is questionable, but whose threat needs to be contained by men.

A beginning has been made in this thesis. The introduction of theoretical tools from beyond the discipline of Classics, indeed beyond conventional literary criticism, demands to be carried out slowly and with caution. The topic of this thesis, focused as it is on the *group* in ancient Athens, made it inevitable that insights about group psychology would be required to help explain the phenomenon. This thesis should be regarded as a case-study in the introduction of a different kind of approach to gender studies in the ancient world. Whilst social identity can offer one reasonable explanation for the apparent obsession with the female group in the literature of Classical Athens (the male perspective of the female group), it does have its limitations. It can offer only suggestions for the possible female perceptions of her own group. These suggestions remain just that - hypotheses and possibilities - because there is no way that we can verify the alternatives against source-material. Because the literature and art of the Classical period was a male phenomenon, it is

difficult to filter from it what the actual female experiences may have been. What can be offered here are several general possibilities for the female perspectives, which have all been verified for small and large group dynamics in social psychological studies in the last 30-40 years. And on the basis of the evidence collected here, the models seem highly applicable to Classical Athens.

It is important to conceptualize male and female in Classical Athens as two separate social groups. Or, to put it another way, one must identify the *social* part of the identity in the groups and their collective dynamics, rather than simply the *personal* identity of individuals who make up those groups. By doing this, we find some likely theories to explain both the negative male perceptions of, and also the positive female experiences in, the female collective in Classical Athens. I certainly do not suggest that this is the only interpretation of male and female relations in Classical Athens, nor of the many negative depictions of the female group in the culture. For instance, some of the Classical assumptions about women in terms of their biology and psychology, as examined in Chapter 2, are vital to our general understanding of Classical gender relations. Also other assumptions about the female group, embedded in the culture of the fifth century, as outlined in Chapter 4, pp.204-09, cannot be ignored. There are undoubtedly many other factors that are not related at all to the social group structure of Athenian society that are extremely useful in explaining negative representations of the female group in Classical literature. I believe that there is not one all-encompassing theory to understand gender issues in Classical Athens. One needs, rather, to support simultaneously several theories to have the best chance of viewing the whole picture. Social identity theory merely provides one useful social-psychological tool to this end.

Individual insights from the different chapters

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first part investigated the many negative male stereotypes of the female group and female group activity in various genres. Moving away from the male perceptions of the group, the second part began to attempt an understanding of female group interaction from the participants' perspective. Each

chapter, therefore, dealt with a different, but complementary aspect of the female group.

The study of such notorious groups in myth as the Amazons, Danaids and Lemnians in Chapter 1 constituted an important initial step in the investigation of the phenomenon of the transgressive female group in Classical literature. It exemplified the fundamentally negative stereotypical depiction which attached to all female groups. Although there have been studies of the separate groups in the past, they have been carried out in isolation of each other.[5] No study has attempted a comparative analysis of all three groups, highlighting their extraordinary structural similarities. Such a comparative analysis was able to gauge the significance of the *group* nature of all these mythic collectives to their negative portrayal, and to view their presentations in the context of the opposing social identities of the sexes. Through an understanding of a central theory of discourse analysis; namely, that the kind of discourse describing phenomena often actively creates, or constructs those phenomena, we became aware of the persistent attempt to construct the female groups negatively. The negative construction of one group was seen to affect the depiction of all the other groups, so that there were virtually no female groups depicted positively at all.

There were found to be altogether many fewer depictions of male groups in myth, and of them, generally speaking, groups analogous to the Greek citizen male group were depicted positively, such as is the case with groups of heroes, and armies adopting civilized values, whereas groups antithetical to the ingroup, semi-divine, subhuman groups were depicted relatively negatively. This was not surprising, bearing in mind that the male group was likely to characterize itself positively and other groups negatively to safeguard its collective self-esteem. But there appeared to be a

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[5]For instance Eva C. Keuls studied the theme of the Amazons in *The Reign of the Phallus: Sexual Politics in Ancient Athens*, 2nd edn (Berkeley, CA and London: University of California Press, 1993), and separately, the Danaids in *The Water Carriers in Hades: A Study of Catharsis through Toil in Classical Antiquity* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1974).

certain problematization of the female group, unlike in the cases of the other groups. Within the female group depictions, there was a large degree of parallelism, and stereotyping. There were three structural similarities which homogenized the female groups and presented stereotypical ways in which the female group's threat was conquered and contained by the male group.

First, the female groups were described as lacking cohesion and discipline, because there was always a rebel to the cause who betrayed the group; second, the group was always either destroyed or reabsorbed into patriarchy, and was not allowed to exist for long as a female-only community; and third, the existence of the transgressive behaviour of the group was continually challenged in discourse by the creation of counter-myths which offered versions of the group which characterized them as much less destructive and threatening. It is possible to identify some examples of negative male groups, that also show signs of having certain stereotypical elements in their depictions. For instance, there are 'odd-ones-out' amongst the Satyrs and Centaurs, who constitute different more civilized examples of the group norm. These examples, however, were felt to be different from the examples of the female 'strike-breaker' of each group, who actively defied the group rules and thus characterized the group as particularly unstable and lacking cohesion.

In Chapter 2, I focused specifically on the representation of the female group in one genre. I showed that the qualities which were commonly aligned with the female group gave it credentials especially appropriate to play the chorus in tragedy. In Classical thought, certain negative qualities were thought to be aligned with the female, and especially the female group. One of these qualities was a woman's excessive emotionality, derived from her biology, and her ability to express emotion to affect those around her. In respect of Aristotle's understanding of the cathartic function of tragedy, and the pleasure rendered through the feelings stirred watching tragic theatrical events (*Poet.* 1449b27-28, 1453b10-14), this quality would have rendered female characters the perfect site for the chorus in tragedy. In this respect, I have taken my departure from such critics as Gould and Segal who have, quite rightly, recognized how it was the collective nature of the chorus and its role in

lamentation which especially heightened the overall emotional effect rendered on the tragic audience.[6] The additional insight that I have brought to their work, is the recognition that, because of important societal assumptions which attached to the female and female group, the collective and lamentational effects of the chorus were best exemplified by a female chorus.

As well as the female group being particularly appropriate in the context of the tragic collective, elderly men were considered by society to share some characteristics with females, especially in terms of their emotional natures. Unlike in the case of mature adult men, there appeared to be a greater understanding and tolerance of the elderly giving vent to unrestrained emotion in the style of women. This societal leniency towards older men is interesting in the light of the fact that amongst the extant tragedies, where we do not find female choruses, and excepting a couple of choruses of military groups of younger men, we only find choruses of elderly men. On the basis of this little evidence, the theory that an emotional and emotion-arousing chorus was the best choice for the tragic stage, seems even more convincing. Because of the limited number of tragedies which have survived, however, we cannot know whether a female, or an elderly (feminized) chorus was the preferred option on the Classical stage. In the extant works, at least, Aeschylus and Euripides used a female chorus considerably more often than a male chorus.

In the other key genre of Athenian dramatic literature, comedy, we also found a significant attraction to the theme of the female group, as exemplified by Aristophanes' three plays, *Lysistrata, Thesmophoriazusae* and *Ecclesiazusae*. In this case, however, Chapter 3 showed that, comedy offered us other qualities of the female and the female group, beyond the obsessive negative characterization common in most genres. For while there is certainly a large degree of parody of the female

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[6]See John Gould, 'Tragedy and Collective Experience', in *Tragedy and the Tragic: Greek Theatre and Beyond'*, ed. by M. S. Silk (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp.217-43; Charles Segal, 'Catharsis, Audience, and Closure in Greek Tragedy', in Silk above (pp.149-72); and Charles Segal, *Euripides and the Poetics of Sorrow: Art, Gender, and Commemoration in 'Alcestis', 'Hippolytus' and 'Hecuba'* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 1993).

characters, and they are sometimes depicted negatively, there is also an attempt by Aristophanes to depict female group interaction as something very positive in contrast with male interaction in the context of inter and intra-state activity. Thus we find a complete reversal of the most usual perception of out- and ingroups, where a critical view is taken of the outgroup, and a self-congratulatory one of the ingroup. It is not surprising to find such a reversal of the norm from the man who acted as a merciless critic and parodist of the *polis* and those who ran it: the male community.

My finding that some more faithful and positive representations of the female group are to be found in Aristophanes, stands in direct contradiction with Taaffe's recent assessment of the female characters in Aristophanes as entirely negative, parodic representations of the female, in which no attempt is made to depict them as anything other than men in female costumes.[7] A close linguistic study of the three 'women' plays, however, has revealed that the language of the female characters is markedly different from that of the male characters. Although there is no question of the male and female discourses remaining consistent throughout the plays, there are a number of linguistic features that mark out the female language as noticeably different from the male language in its non-combative and non-hierarchical style. Since the beginning of research into gender differences in language in the early twentieth century, this style has been noted by sociolinguists as a marker of female discourse. Even if the non-hierarchical style of female discourse is rather more a reflection of how we *imagine* women talk (folk-linguistic speculation), rather than how women actually do speak, and even if it is a stereotypical female language, its presence in Aristophanes nevertheless attests to the fact that female interaction was credited with some positive qualities.

In the second part of the thesis, the emphasis shifted from the exaggerated representations of the female groups in the literature of the period, to a consideration of the perspective of the members of those female groups themselves. When we

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[7]Lauren K. Taaffe, *Aristophanes and Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p.139.

collected the vast number of bizarre male-generated stories of the women-only festival of Thesmophoria in Chapter 4, it became clear that such exaggerated and biased perceptions of the festival could not, in any sense, reflect reality. According to social identity theory, these perceptions, which include homogenization and negative stereotyping, are the normal ways for the excluded to categorize an outgroup. Even though we do not have sources that record the women's own perception of their festival, I showed that it was possible to open up another perspective to the festival. This perspective, the female one, has been vainly sought after by many critics in the past (see Chapter 4, n.2). I hope to have provided here a different avenue of study for those who seek to view the festivals from a perspective other than the traditional male one. For by recognizing again that men and women formed different social identities, we can understand the fantastical male accounts of the Thesmophoria and the possible female perceptions of it. This kind of theorizing allows us an opportunity at last to move beyond the views of the outsiders, and to consider what kinds of views may have been held by the insiders of the female groups.

The female experiences would have been far removed from the male assumptions about the activities at the festivals. On the contrary, through social identity theory, I have suggested that the female members of the festival group were likely to have enjoyed the festival; conformed to its norms; been proud of their role in it; seen the importance of their status as women because of it, and thus uniquely the life-givers; and valued precisely the context of the festival as a women-only occasion on which they would have felt secure in the knowledge that they were part of a cohesive group with a common purpose. On these terms, the festivals, and indeed other women-only activity would have been the source of a significant portion of a woman's self-esteem, the significance of which should not be underestimated for the women themselves, the men, or gender relations in Classical Athens.

In Chapter 5, the study of the 'shared women's world' was expanded. We saw that the women-only festivals were not the only site for female interaction and the formation of a strong social identity as women. The social identity of a woman would also have become salient in other contexts also. For I showed that, contrary to a large

amount of scholarship on women's lives in Classical Athens, women enjoyed social networks and freedoms in such contexts as religious and secular ceremonial activities; the pursuit of economic and non-waged labour; and the formation of female visiting networks. These activities have not been properly recognized for a long time in scholarship because of our own ethnocentrism. As western post-industrial societies, we harbour many biases, one of which concerns the kinds of activities we deem to constitute legitimate social activity, worthy of study. And women's social activities in the ancient world do not fall into the legitimate category. By building on the work of David Cohen, and using further data from modern social anthropology, drawn from many different societies, some of which are pre- or only semi-industrialized, we have been able to propose a model of interactive women's lives in the ancient world. This is not to say that the gaps in our knowledge about women's lives in Classical Athens can simply be filled in by data from modern rural Greece or other 'face-to-face' societies, but the modern techniques of studying a foreign culture can make us aware of our ethnocentrism and bias which is obscuring our view of the ancient material.[8] By applying the questions asked of the modern world to the ancient world, it is possible to see the ancient world in a different light, and to recognize a flourishing women's world. The existence of a strong women's network may have been an important factor in increasing the anxiety amongst the citizen male group, which was then reflected in the consistently stereotypical and negative representations of the female community in Classical culture.

Further study

Each chapter offered an important introduction to the specific area of study which it defined. In each case, the research here acts as a springboard to further study offering an even more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of the female group in Classical Greece. For instance, the research in Chapter 1 concerning the mythic

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[8]I derive the term 'face-to-face' societies from David Cohen. See my Chapter 5, p.226 for his definition.

stories of the Amazons, Danaids and Lemnians lends itself to a more inclusive study of all the other mythic groups, popular in the fifth century, which could only be mentioned briefly there (see Chapter 1, n.89). Also, while my study attempts a synchronic overview of a specific period, further study could monitor the *changing* perceptions of the female group in mythic discourse, or, rather, the static nature of the myths of the transgressive group. For as men and women were in opposing social groups for so much of Antiquity, and men remained the dominant mythmakers throughout it, I predict that similar representations of the female group may be expected from different periods and places.

In research on the female choruses in tragedy, I found other characteristics attributed to the female and the female group that would have possibly rendered her a good candidate for the role of tragic chorus. These include the passivity of the female and her theatricality or duplicity (see Chapter 2, n.94 for details). Apart from extending the study to include these other characteristics, it would be useful to categorize the concept of the female chorus into different types, such as the old, the young, the slave and the free. If one studied more closely the societal preconceptions of these different kinds of women, one could see whether, in each chorus, the particular qualities accorded the different categories of women were incorporated into, and important to, their choral role in the drama. This would provide for a more nuanced study of the female chorus.

The identification of a particular variety of female discourse in Aristophanes' three plays featuring female groups, outlined in Chapter 3, constitutes an initial step into the fascinating area of a gendered language in ancient texts. There is clearly much more work to be done here. For example, simply in terms of the female language in Aristophanes, a more detailed study would be able to pinpoint differences in the way young female characters spoke as opposed to older ones, or free women as opposed to slave women etc. Furthermore, this kind of more nuanced study would require an investigation of many more features of the language than has been possible within the space available here, such as, for instance, line length. Further study comparing in detail examples of exclusively male interaction and discourse with exclusively female

interaction and discourse in Aristophanes' plays would be able to substantiate more fully the insights of this chapter on the important differences in Aristophanes' stage sexes. Comparative work investigating the women's language as portrayed in Aristophanes, and the language given to women in other genres such as tragedy or philosophy, would offer a broader picture of whether differences in language were commonly assigned to the sexes in ancient Greece, and whether this reflected, at some level, a perception of real differences.[9]

There is no end to both the male-generated stories of female activity and to the number of different women-only events, not only in Classical Athens, but throughout Classical Greece as well, that could feature in a study of this kind. By choosing to take a specific case study of a small task-oriented group, the Thesmophoria festival, in Chapter 4, to elaborate fully the perspective from social identity theory, I was not able to consider such other important women-only events and the stories they evoked as the Maenadic rituals. The last two chapters, which explored some of the female-only activities which went on in Classical Athens have had to be highly selective. A much more comprehensive study of the female world of joint activities could be the object of future work, using the last two chapters of the thesis as a model for methodology.

I have limited my project to a study of the literary representation of the female group. A work of equal length would be required to do justice to the evidence we have for the female group in visual art. On the basis of the small amount of visual evidence which I have used in Chapters 1 and 5, the study of vase depictions and public sculptures would probably result in similar conclusions, as have been established from my literary study, concerning the female group in Classical Athens.

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[9]The detailed linguistic research which is likely to reveal such differences is of the sort found in work by Eleanor Dickey, who, in her recently published thesis, did not focus on gender differences in language, but studied exhaustively forms of address in Classical and Hellenistic prose works. See Eleanor Dickey, *Greek Forms of Address: From Herodotus to Lucian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

Lastly, as the discipline of social psychology is forever developing, and within it, the social identity approach in the study of groups is continually being modified to make an ever more precise tool, further understanding of this area would be highly valuable for Classical studies. For the refinements which are now being made to social identity theory, especially by feminists who are developing a more pluralistic notion of social identity based on sexual identity, bring vital advances to the study of groups, not just in contemporary society, but in the ancient world also (see Introduction, n.10, n.18).

I do not claim in the preceding chapters to have been able to see from that elusive 'women's perspective' that has been the aim of John Winkler and so many others studying the lives of women in Antiquity. But by employing such methods as have been used in this thesis, we may be able to prevent ourselves looking always and solely through those clouded lenses of the reporters with their 'masculinist attitudes', which, according to Winkler, have for so long hampered our progress in gender studies in the ancient world.[10]

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[10]The two terms, 'women's perspective' and 'masculinist attitudes' are taken from John J. Winkler, 'The Laughter of the Oppressed: Demeter and the Gardens of Adonis', in *The Constraints of Desire: The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece*, by John J. Winkler (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), pp.188-209 (p.188).

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